

## INTERREG EUROPE PROJECT IDEA

- essential services provision and the assessment of the appropriate administrative capacity required

Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) states that “everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including *water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications*.”

These essential services - although not directly addressed in the Treaties as such - have been linked (EESC 2019) to the concept of “services of general economic interest” (SGEIs) that are already covered by EU law. According to Article 36 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, the Union recognises and respects access to SGEIs, in order to promote the social and territorial cohesion of the Union.

Protocol 26 on services of general interest (annexed to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)) recognises the essential role and wide discretion of national, regional and local authorities in providing, commissioning and organising these services, and their diversity within the Union. Equally, it highlights that the values related to the quality, safety and affordability, equal treatment, universal access and users’ rights are shared values of the Union in respect of services of general economic interest.

The concept of “essential services” as illustrated in Principle 20 of the EPSR by a non-exhaustive list of services - water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications - is well established in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), proposed by the UN and endorsed by the EU. The concept of essential services used herein covers some of the essential services listed in Principle 20 (e.g. water, sanitation and energy) but also other key principles of the EPSR (e.g. access to healthcare, inclusive education and life-long learning).

But providing these services - especially at a certain quality level - starts with the appropriate administrative capacity of the public authorities involved. Most - if not all - of these essential services are provided by the local and/or regional public authorities.

**Capacity building** has played an essential role in the development of member states, special funding being allocated by the European Union particularly for this scope. **Local government administrative capacity is extremely important when addressing major reforms like decentralization or administrative-territorial reorganisation, but it is just as important in evaluating public services provision, especially when addressing the essential services which are vital to citizens' daily lives. So how is administrative capacity evaluated, with a particular focus on the provision of the essential services** illustrated in Principle 20 of the EPSR?

The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration is interested in **developing the current methodology on the evaluation of the administrative capacity of administrative-territorial units**, as approved in annex 5 of the Government Decision no. 800/2022, **with the inclusion of data/indicators that assess local authorities' capacity to provide the essential services citizens need on a daily basis.**

The development of this methodology represents a first step in a more accurate administrative capacity evaluation that could create a **possible basis for future public policies and funding allocation, as a clear support central Government offers the local level in their efforts to improve service provision for the ultimate benefit of citizens.**

With these in mind, **if you are interested in developing service provision in one of the areas defined as essential**, if you would like **to update/complete your local/regional development strategy**, with a focus on one of the essential services' provision, should you **have any interest in local government administrative capacity evaluation** or can relate to our project idea in any other way, please don't hesitate to **contact us.**

We are **currently looking for potential partners** that we can further develop this project in order to submit it for financing under the (estimated) **March 2023 Interreg Europe** call.

**Contact person:**

**Domnica Focșăneanu - Deputy Director**

Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration

General Directorate of Public Administration

Directorate for Reform and Strategies in Public Administration

Email: [dgap.drap.mdf@gmail.com](mailto:dgap.drap.mdf@gmail.com), [domnica.focsaneanu@mdlpa.ro](mailto:domnica.focsaneanu@mdlpa.ro)