

WWF Romania: With no forestry reform plan in place, PNRR allocations risk being wasted

Allocations via the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) for forests and natural protected areas amount to about 1.5 billion euros, but there's a risk that these funds will be wasted with no concrete finality because there is currently no reform plan for forestry in place, WWF Romania said in a statement.

According to the environmental organization, Romania should put out every year a National Reform Plan, which should include forestry among its key structural reforms, identify concrete annual needs and subsequently allocate funding for meeting them.

"The most recent plan was developed in April 2020, and no plan has yet been devised for this year. In this situation, how can the government decide the directions for investing the European money allocated for reforms if it hasn't yet committed to the reforms it wants to implement?," the organization argues.

WWF Romania's project manager for forests and protected areas Antoanela Costea considers that in order to be substantive, the reform needs a plan and detailed allocation sheets to clearly set out allocations and the result indicators.

"At this moment, the PNRR is just a wish list. For it to get substance, we need a reform plan, detailed sheets to understand how the funds are actually allocated and what the result indicators are. If we want the forestry interventions proposed in the PNRR to be approved, we must present the European Commission the concrete steps and the expected finality for each reform and investment," Costea underlined.

The representatives of the environmental organization consider that it's time for the government to commit to a National Forestry Policy that should include the reforms and strategic directions identified last year following the public consultation process carried out under the coordination of the academic environment.

WWF Romania representatives deplore the fact that two major proposals supported by WWF for the forestry sector have not been included in the PNRR draft.

One refers to the development of AI-based solutions to allow the digital measurement and establishment of the digital footprint of the harvested wood that is put on the market.

The other is the Single Forest Directory - a GIS database to be incorporated into the Wood Tracking National Integrated System - SUMAL that provides basic information on the origin of the wood, as the first link in the wood management chain. "Without a clear record of forest areas, one cannot develop a relevant and consistent legislative framework, investments cannot be absorbed to support sustainable forest management or plan an efficient control," reads the WWF Romania statement.