

# ACTION PLAN

ROMANIA, 2022



This action plan was prepared by Rasinari Municipality and Regional Development Agency Center under Interreg Europe programme project Revitalizing Remote And Mountainous areas through Sustainable Alternative Tourism (RAMSAT). This project - RAMSAT is supported under the European Union (Interreg Europe / ERDF).

## CONTENT

Part I – General information.....	4
Short intro about Marginimea Sibiului.....	4
Vision and objectives for Marginimea Sibiului from the ecotourism perspective	6
Vision .....	6
Objectives .....	7
Part II – Policy context.....	9
Part III – Details on the actions envisaged.....	12
ACTION 1 .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Name of the action: Recognition of Marginimea Sibiului as Ecotourism Destination in Romania.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Relevance to the project .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Nature of the action .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Stakeholders involved .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Timeframe .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Costs .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Funding sources.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
ACTION 2 .....	12
Name of the action: Promoting the cooperation among stakeholders in order to enhance the development of ecotourism tourism in Marginimea Sibiului .....	12
Relevance to the project .....	12
Nature of the action .....	13
Stakeholders involved .....	14
Timeframe .....	14
Costs .....	14
Funding sources.....	14
Conclusions.....	14

## Part I – General information

Project: 'Revitalizing Remote And Mountainous areas through Sustainable Alternative Tourism' - RAMSAT

Partner organisation: Regional Development Agency Centru

Rasinari Municipality

Country: Romania

NUTSII region: Centre

Contact person:

1. Ovidia Caba

Email address: [ovidia.caba@adrcentru.ro](mailto:ovidia.caba@adrcentru.ro)

Phone number: +40 258 818 616

2. Carmen Ghidiu

email address: [carmen.ghidiu@primaria-rasinari.ro](mailto:carmen.ghidiu@primaria-rasinari.ro)

phone number: +40 744 148 362

3. Alexandra Dadarlat

email address: [alexandra.dadarlat@primaria-rasinari.ro](mailto:alexandra.dadarlat@primaria-rasinari.ro)

4. Daniela Obrase

email address: [daniela.obarse@primaria-rasinari.ro](mailto:daniela.obarse@primaria-rasinari.ro)

### Short intro about Marginimea Sibiului

Rasinari Municipality and Regional Development Agency Centru are partners in the RAMSAT project '**Revitalizing Remote And Mountainous areas through Sustainable Alternative Tourism**'. The project was approved under Call 4 of the Inter-reg Europe Programme:

- Priority axis 4 - Environment and resource efficiency



- Specific objective: Improving natural and cultural heritage policies.

The area of the project is represented by a mountain area called Marginimea Sibiului, composed of 18 villages (40.000 inhabitants) that share the same traditions, architecture and history which makes this area is a unique ethnographic region. The area is situated south-west of the city of Sibiu, in Southern Transylvania, at the foot of Cindrel and Lotru Mountains and has approx. 140.000 ha., characterised by a rich history in sheep breeding. The unicity of Marginimea Sibiului was recognized at European level, in 2015, when this region won the award “European Destination of Excellence in Tourism and Local gastronomy”. This award was given by the European Commission through the EDEN project. One of the largest surfaces of spruce (*Picea abies*) forest in Romania is situated in this region, thus offering optimal conditions for habitats and species, such as large carnivores (i.e., *Ursus arctos*, *Lynx lynx*), birds (i.e., *Tetrao urogallus*, *Strix uralensis*) and many other fauna and flora species. More than 55% of Marginimea Sibiului is part of the Natura 2000 area of protected areas (Fig.1 – Map of Marginimea Sibiului).

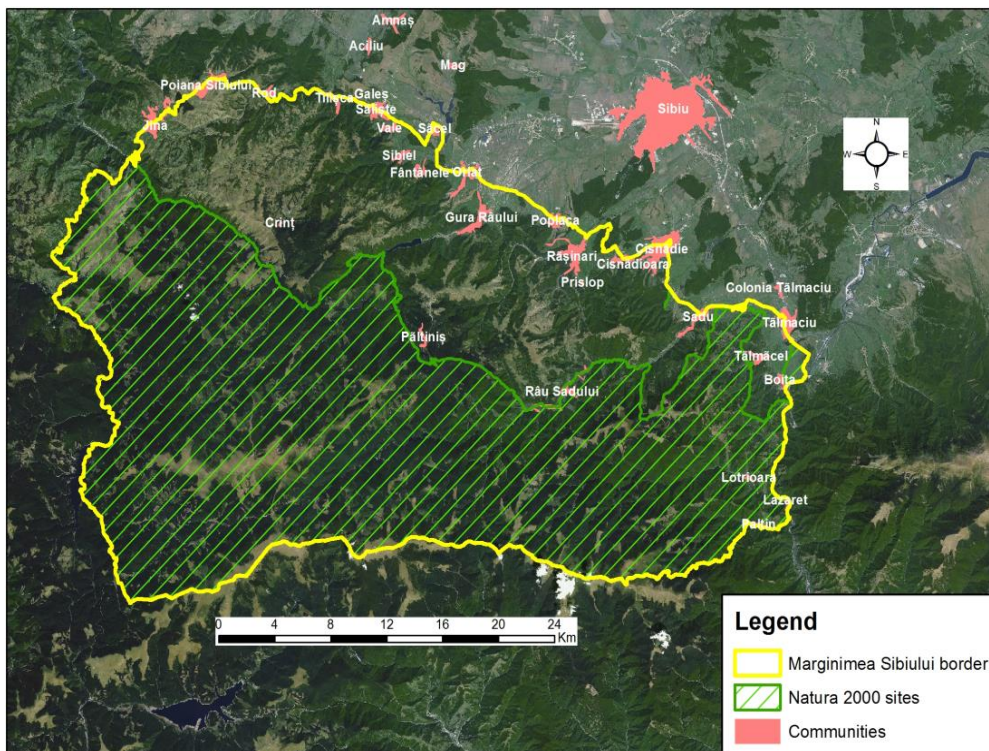


Fig 1 - Map of Marginimea Sibiului, Romania.

## Vision and objectives for Marginimea Sibiului from the ecotourism perspective

### Vision

Marginimea Sibiului will be an identifiable destination with a clear brand, nationally and internationally promoted, integrating a sustainable component and implemented through a unitary management of the destination. The tourist destination Mărginimea Sibiului will include two major components: the ecotourism destination (rural area, the hills and the alpine area including the Natura 2000 sites) and additionally the Păltiniș area, a four-season mountain resort, with a clear development policy based on sustainability. Trails for motorized off-road access will be well designed, marked and properly managed, in order to have a limited impact on natural ecosystems and on the overall ecotourism experience. The Mărginimea Sibiului tourist brand will be assimilated by local food and non-food products and will support the promotion of the area, but also the continuation of the traditional character of the local economy.

The vision for the tourism development of Marginimea Sibiului is based on the zoning of the territory (Fig. 2) that was proposed in the RAMSAT project. Four different zones were identified based on their physical and geographical characteristics, accommodation capacity and type of experience offered:

1. Zone 1: **The Rural area** with the hearth of the localities and their immediate vicinities.
2. Zone 2: The area with the existing **hay huts** generally on the main and secondary edges starting from the Cindrel Mountains.
3. Zone 3: **The Alpine** part of the Cindrel Mountains with forest and pastureland.
4. Zone 4: **Păltiniș**, including the Platoș area and the ski domain.

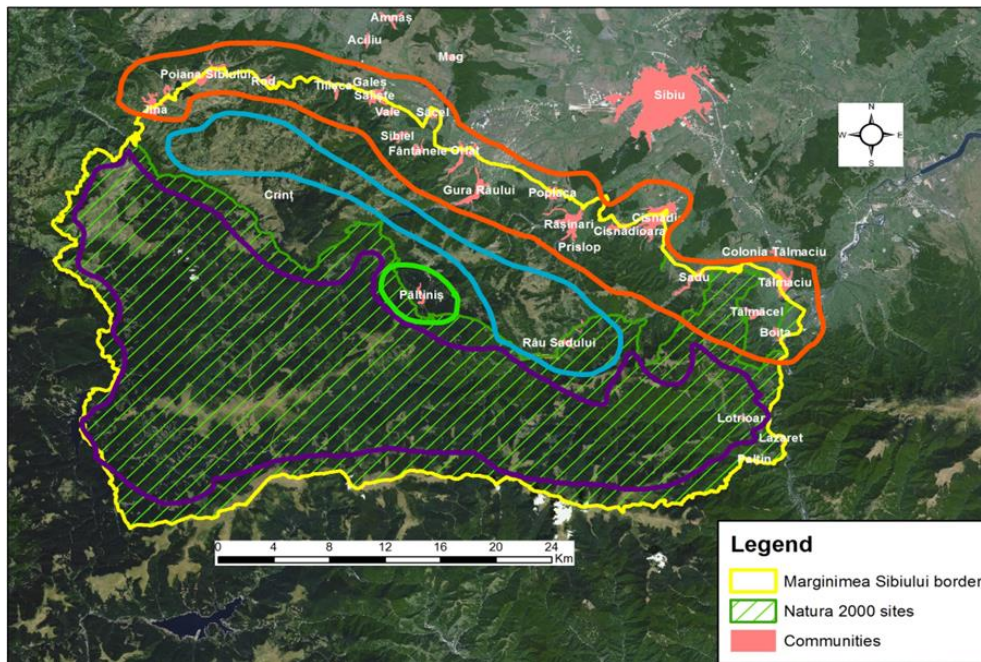


Fig. 2 – Zoning of the territory of Marginimea Sibiului: ■ The Rural Area; ■ The Piedmont Area with hay huts; ■ The Alpine area; ■ Paltinis area with ski domain.

### Objectives

Taking in consideration the specific of Marginimea Sibiului identified with the help of the SWOT analysis performed within RAMSAT project, some **general objectives** were set for the entirely area, namely:

- To realize a unitary management of the entire destination Mărginimea Sibiului, implemented by a dedicated team;
- To embrace by all partners of the public administration, the private sector, NGOs and the administrator of the Natura 2000 site of a unitary plan for the sustainable development of the ecotourism destination;
- To enhance the management of the protected areas on the territory of the destination, by increasing the capacity to interpret the natural values of the area and of the dedicated field personnel (rangers);
- To solve the current conflict situation between different types of motorized and non-motorized recreation and tourism experiences.

**Specific development objectives** were identified for each of the four zone of the destination

Therefore, for zone 1 - **The Rural area with the hearth of the localities and their immediate vicinities**, the following specific objectives were set:

- to increase the length of stay by achieving an integrated management of recreational products and infrastructure for tourists staying in this area,

- to realize a tourism destination brand that will be adopted by the tourism services, but also by the local producers in order to stimulate the traditional local economy;
- to built soft infrastructure (e.gg trails around the villages, bike lanes for families), which will stimulate the emergence of new market segments and will generate an increase in stay.

For zone 2 - **The area with the existing hay huts generally on the hillsides starting from the main ridge of the Cindrel Mountains**, the specific objectives are:

- the development of this area around the central experience of returning to archaic times;
- realization of additional sources of income, but also increasing the self-esteem for the locals who maintain their hay huts, through the additional contribution from tourism;
- directing and limiting off-road motorized access for recreation only on certain clearly defined routes.

Zone 3: **The Alpine part of the Cindrel Mountains with forest and pastureland**, has the following specific objective:

- Preserving the natural character of the area, by:
  - Limiting motorized access for recreation;
  - Reduction of erosion caused by motorized access;
  - Maintenance of existing sheepfolds;
  - Protection of the Iezer-Cindrelului reservation;
- Safe area for non-motorized mountain activities.

For zone 4: **Păltiniș, including the Platoș area and the ski domain**, the specific objectives identified are:

- To achieve a unitary management between the two development poles: the initial resort Păltiniș and Arena Platoș;
- To implementation of a four-season development plan for the Păltiniș mountain resort, of local and regional interest, based on a well-defined sustainability plan.

The destination needs a vision and action plan assumed by all main partners from public administration, the private sector, NGOs but also the administrators of the Natura 2000 protected areas. In this regards, RAMSAT project was a great opportunity to gather all stakeholders and work together for sustainable development of the destination. This action plan is needed to further develop Marginimea Sibiului on the principles of sustainability.



## Part II – Policy context

1. The Action Plan aims to impact:
  - Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
  - European Territorial Cooperation programme
  - Other regional development policy instrument

2. Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:

Rasinari Municipality (PP6) and Regional Development Agency Centru (PP7) as partners in RAMSAT had to address the **Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020 Axis 7 The diversification of local economies through the development of sustainable tourism, Investment priority 7.1 Supporting a favourable increase in employment through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas and increasing accessibility and development of specific natural and cultural resources**. The specific objective of this policy instrument (PI) was to boost employment and thus, increase the number of jobs in underdeveloped areas in Romania that are valuable from a touristic point of view such as spa resorts or other touristic retreats. However, this policy instrument addressed only spa resort accredited in accordance with the Governmental Decision 825/2008 and the projects submitted had to be part of a local strategy. Both conditions were restrictive especially for rural areas, mountains areas, eco destinations or other areas valuables from natural and cultural point of view but that have no possibility in the future to be accredited as spa resorts. ROP 2014-2020 was a centralised program with regional allocations. The specific of Investment priority 7.1 was the concentration of the budget allocated in specific areas with proved tourism potential. Centru region has 27 spa resorts accredited by the Ministry in charge. A lot of areas with tourism potential exists in the region and most of them have big challenges in ensuring an appropriate tourism infrastructure (necessary also for their accreditation as spa resorts), most of them are in rural areas that faced demographic changes, with low economic diversification.



Nevertheless, the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020 *Axis 7 The diversification of local economies through the development of sustainable tourism* was at the end of its implementation in 2020, no additional calls were launched since 2017 because all the funds were contracted. Thus, the team focused on tackling another similar instrument that will be applied in the next programming period 2021-2027, namely **Regional Operational Programme Centre (ROP) 2021-2027, Priority 7- A region with sustainable tourism**.

3. Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instruments:

The RAMSAT team focused on addressing a new policy instrument, namely the **Regional Operational Programme Centre 2021-2027, Priority 7- A region with sustainable tourism**, specific objective on rural areas: **7.1 Sustainable development of rural communities by highlighting their cultural and natural heritage**. In this regard, meetings were held with responsible authorities and feedback was sent in order to improve this policy. The stakeholders working groups were organised in order to work on addressing this policy instrument. During several meetings of the Ramsat SG, the MA of ROP Centru has presented the priority 7 of the program, in different stages of drafting, in order to collect inputs and assess the needs of the potential beneficiaries. Consistent proposals for improvement were received from RAMSAT SG related to including rural destinations, Natura 2000 sites, EDEN destination and eco-destination as eligible for funding within ROP Center 2021-2027. The main reason for including these destinations in ROP Center 2021-2027 was to develop sustainable tourism in the Centru region of Romania.

Partnership is a key principle when designing development programs and it is even more important in case of programs supported by the Cohesion policy that should lead to a more balanced development and reduction of disparities. As Romanian regions are not administrative regions, the construction and delivery of an effective program rely even more on the competences and involvement of the regional partners.

The meetings and activities held during the RAMSAT project, help in understanding the state of art of sustainable tourism in Marginimea Sibiului and in the remote and mountain areas, and the steps forward. All the knowledge gained during the implementation of the project, namely the Interregional Seminar, the Thematic Seminars (Ecotourism, Adventure Tourism, Cultural & Rural Tourism), a regional SWOT analysis, many stakeholders meeting groups and good practices identified, was explored in order to improve the policy instrument of the Regional Operational Programme Centre 2021-2027, Priority 7- A region with sustainable tourism, specific objective on rural areas: 7.1 Sustainable development of rural communities by highlighting their cultural and natural heritage. **The actors involved in RAMSAT stakeholder group have extended expertise in ecotourism, rural tourism and brought in the attention of the MA information and examples of possible activities that could be included in the program, some of them linked to the good practices and learning process developed during RAMSAT.**

A source of inspiration for the action plan (and the policy instrument) was the good practice example presented by **PP1- Comunidade Intermunicipal do Alentejo, Portugal**, regarding the project "**Alentejo Feel Nature**". The good practice promotes the valorisation of natural footpaths in Alto Alentejo region through digitalisation. The project selects pedestrian and cycling routes present in a territory with 15 municipalities and initiates a process of valorisation of the territory. In this way, the territory is capable of generating new innovative tourist products with high potential,

which contribute to the consolidation of existing tourist activity. The activity also fosters the emergences of new business initiative and promotes the creation of new jobs that induce the settlement of local population.

In addition, the good practice presented by **PP3- Zasavje Regional Development Agency, Slovenia** regarding **"Engaging the stakeholders in a renovation and repurposing process of a mining area"**, was another source of inspiration. In this practice, the community is working together (local associations, public institutions, local authorities etc) in transforming a region with long and rich history. The stakeholders are taking a step by step approach in addressing and better promote their tangible and intangible heritage.

With all knowledge gained during RAMSAT project, proposals for tackling and improving the policy instrument were made for the 1<sup>st</sup> version of the Regional Operational Programme Centre 2021-2027 (version September 2020), the 2<sup>nd</sup> version of ROP Centre 2021-2027 (version April 2021) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last version of ROP Centre 2021-2027 (November 2021), Priority 7- A region with sustainable tourism. An intense communication was performed with the policy instrument authority, namely the Management Authority from drafting sessions, to official letters and online meetings on the subject. Feedback was sent to the policy instrument authority also by filling a questionnaire related to the Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027. Feedback was given having in mind the lessons learned from the good practices of the partners and from the findings on the policy learning platform.

The project promoted by PP1, namely "Alentejo feel nature" is a very good example of how local communities can value their natural and cultural heritage by developing ecotourism services. Further on, the good practice emphasises that this new approach is responsible for arising of new touristic services and creation of jobs that induce settlement of population in mountain/ remote rural areas. These features, namely ecotourism/ sustainable development and rural areas were embedded in the policy instrument, Priority 7 of ROP. More, the good practice promoted by PP3 about engaging local stakeholders in order to sustainable develop tourism in an area was another source of inspiration for Priority 7. The policy instrument broadened the support for developing sustainable tourism by enabling local rural authorities to have access to funding through ROP, Priority 7.



Thanks to the project, the RAMSAT team succeeded in including in the last version of ROP Centre 2021-2027 a priority related specific to tourism in rural destinations namely Priority 7- A region with sustainable tourism, with a specific objective on rural areas: **7.1 Sustainable development of rural communities by highlighting their cultural and natural heritage.**

Therefore, thanks to the interventions of the RAMSAT team, local authorities from rural areas have access to funding for developing sustainable tourism by valorisation of cultural and natural heritage. The Regional Operational Programme Centre 2021-2027 , Axis 7 – A region with sustainable tourism through Priority 7.1 Sustainable

development of rural communities by highlighting their cultural and natural heritage, broadened the support for developing tourism in rural areas in the center part of Romania

Beyond the policy impact for the Regional Operational Programme Centre 2021-2027, the following policy instruments were identified and addressed through the RAMAST project: Regional Development Plan 2021-2027, Smart Specialization Strategy of the Centre Region 2021-2027. In order to tackle the policy instruments mentioned, Rasinari Municipality (PP6) together with the Regional Development Agency Centru (PP7) participated actively in the Focus group on "Tourism - field of intelligent specialization" created for the elaboration of the Smart Specialization Strategy of the Centre Region 2021-2027 or in the Focus group on Tourism for elaborating Sibiu County Development Strategy for 2021-2030.

The action plan designed within the RAMST project will further influence the policy instrument Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027, investment priority 7.1 Sustainable development of rural communities by highlighting their cultural and natural heritage, by engaging the stakeholders in improving the good governance of the policy instrument especially by involving them in the drafting sessions organised for the elaboration of the specific guidelines for applicants

## Part III – Details on the actions envisaged

### ACTION 1

**Name of the action: Promoting the cooperation among stakeholders in order to enhance the development of ecotourism tourism in Marginimea Sibiului and ensure a good governance of the policy instrument**

#### Relevance to the project

The good practice presented by **PP3- Zasavje Regional Development Agency, Slovenia** regarding "**Engaging the stakeholders in a renovation and repurposing process of a mining area**", was the source of inspiration for this action. In this practice, the community is working together (local associations, public institutions, local authorities etc) in transforming a region with long and rich history. The stakeholders are taking a step by step approach in addressing and better promote their tangible and intangible heritage.

Following this approach, the stakeholders in Marginimea Sibiului should continue working together for addressing and developing sustainable tourism in the region



having in mind that by engaging all relevant actors from tourism sector has a beneficial impact on local sustainable development. The cooperation among stakeholders will enhance the development of ecotourism in the region and will ensure a good governance of the policy instrument. A partnership with all relevant stakeholders such as local public authorities, NGOs, regional entities will be established in order to set a common and uniform management of Marginimea Sibiului regarding ecotourism.

### Nature of the action

Establishing and operationalising a partnership among the stakeholders with expertise in rural and mountain tourism from Marginimea Sibiu and Centru Region for a unitary management of the Marginimea Sibiului ecotourism destination that will act as a partnership structure of the MA in relation to Priority Axis 7 of ROP Centru for the improvement of the policy instrument

The partnership has the role to facilitate the good governance of the policy instrument, namely Priority 7 of ROP Centru, by engaging the main stakeholders, including the rural municipalities where the destination is located, the Sibiu County Tourism Association, protected area administration and other relevant actors. The stakeholders' partnership will function as a working group/ consultative body to the Management Authority in further developing the guidelines for applicants for the Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027, investment priority 7.1 Sustainable development of rural communities by highlighting their cultural and natural heritage, especially for the topic of ecotourism, rural and mountain tourism

The following activities will support the implementation of action:

#### 1.1. Establishing the governance of the stakeholder's partnership.

Communication among all the partners will be performed through online/onsite meetings at least every 6 months or when needed. A decision board will be selected among members.

1.2. Ensure a good governance of the policy instrument by monitoring its progress through engaging the stakeholders in the drafting sessions organised by the Management Authority on the Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027. The stakeholders' partnership will function as a consultative body/Working Group to the Management Authority of the Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027 in developing the application guidelines for Axis 7 – A region with sustainable tourism through Priority 7.1 Sustainable development of rural communities by highlighting their cultural and natural heritage

The stakeholders that are part of the working group are not solely from Marginimea Sibiului area but from the Centre region. The Stakeholders Working Group (SWG)

will be coordinated by the Regional Development Agency Centru and Rasinari Municipality. The SWG will have a focus on mountain and rural tourism. The knowledge gained within RAMSAT project will be used in this working group in order to offer technical support to the existing Working Group on Tourism (WGT) of the Regional Development Agency Centru, namely the Management Authority. Thus, the SWG will function as a technical body under the existing Working Group on Tourism of the Management Authority.

### Stakeholders involved

For implementing action 1, the municipality of Rasinari together with the Sibiu County Tourism Association and several other municipalities from the destinations will be responsible for coordination of this action, together with RDA Centru as MA.

### Timeframe

August 2022- July 2023

Activity 12.1: 12 months (August 2022- January 2023)

Activity 1.2: 12 months and on (August 2022 – July 2023).

The SWG on mountain and rural tourism will meet every 6 months. The meetings will be on line or on site, depending on availability of the members.

The members of the SWG will draft recommendation for the Managing Authority for the development of the applications guidelines for Priority 7.

### Costs

The meetings among stakeholders will be organised mainly on line, thus no costs included. The stakeholders will voluntarily participate at the meetings of the partnerships and in the drafting sessions organised by the Management Authority.

### Funding sources

Rasinari Municipality will provide the logistics necessary for organising the meetings among the stakeholders.

### Conclusions

The action designed together with the policy instrument addressed by RAMSAT will contribute to the development of sustainable tourism in Marginimea Sibiului destination. The action will create opportunities for further development of ecotourism and enhance the cooperation among local partners, as well as foster the establishment of new services and infrastructure specific to ecotourism.





Date: June 2022

Name of the organisation:

Regional Development Agency Centre

Rasinari Municipality