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**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREA THROUGH PROJECTS-  
BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE - WATER AND SEWERAGE SYSTEMS  
IN THE TIMIȘ COUNTY**

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**Abstract:** *Public services of water and sewerage system plays a crucial role for improving life quality for all citizens and to combat social exclusion and isolation. At the beginning of year 2010, Aquatim becomes regional operating company for the water and sewerage system in the Timiș County, operating in 40 localities in that year.*

*At the start of 2015, the area of supply covered 100 localities in the Timis County, including the city of Timișoara, 8 towns – Sănnicolau Mare, Jimbolia, Buziaș, Deta, Recaș, Gătaia, Făget, Ciacova –39 communes and 53 villages. Aquatim represent a significant factor in the sustainable development of rural environment through investment projects.*

*Key words: Aquatim, environmental infrastructure, water and sewerage system, Sustainable development*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social and economic development of rural areas is related to the improvement of basic services and rural infrastructure. Inadequate infrastructure and basic services is the main element that maintains emphasized the gap between rural and urban areas in Romania and represents an obstacle to equality and socio-economic development of rural areas. So is have been identified relevant issues for the the sustainable development of Romanian rural area:

- development of basic infrastructure and services in rural areas;
- to create jobs in rural areas;
- conservation of rural heritage and local traditions;
- reducing poverty and the risk of social exclusion;

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

To minimize the discrepancies that still exist between rural and urban areas and to create decent living conditions of the rural population, investments are needed in building and modernization of basic infrastructure on a small scale in rural areas, and protecting cultural heritage in rural areas.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

### **1. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREA - BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE - WATER AND SEWERAGE SYSTEMS**

Sustainable development of rural areas has as main objectives: to create, improve and diversify economic development facilities, physical infrastructure and basic services ; increasing the attractiveness of rural areas and reduce migration of the population, especially young people.

In Romania water supply network in rural areas is slightly extended. According to INS, only 13.6% of villages are connected to the water supply network in the year 2012.

For this reason creation and modernization of water supply systems and sewerage are basic for rural community.

Public services of water and sewerage system are necessary to ensure health conditions, environment protection and generally favorable conditions for living, providing also the basis for competitive developing rural economy.

In Timiș County starting with 2010, Aquatim is the regional operating company for the water and sewerage system, operating in around 40 localities in that year. At the start of 2015, the area of supply covered 100 localities in the Timis County, including the city of Timișoara, 8 towns – Sânnicolau Mare, Jimbolia, Buziaș, Deta, Receaș, Gătaia, Făget, Ciacova –39 communes and 53 villages. The operation throughout the county is coordinated by the 5 subsidiaries: Buziaș, Deta, Făget, Jimbolia and Sânnicolau Mare.

The provision of services in several localities near Timișoara is managed by the company's head departments overseeing the operation in the city.

Aquatim is a licensed operator for the water and sewerage services in the Timiș County, as certified by the National Regulating Authority for Public Utility Community.

The company has implemented since 2005 a quality, environment, health and occupational safety integrated management system, according to the provisions of ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 specifications. In 2015, an audit of the Romanian Society for Quality Assurance recertified the integrated management system.

Aquatim aims to ensure quality services in the operation area, by providing water supply and sewerage at the quality standards imposed by law.

## **2. ADVANTAGES OF THE REGIONALIZATION – AQUATIM REGIONAL OPERATOR**

The provision of the services by a regional operating company is a criterion of eligibility necessary in order to get financing from european programmes and thus a commitment for implementation of long-term investments. The regional operation brings also a series of immediate advantages.

Development strategy of Aquatim aimed at developing infrastructure services in the operating area by projects modernization of existing technologies and new water treatment stations, waste water treatment plant, networks expansion, connection to the sewerage systems, manhole, watermeters, pumping stations.

Through these modernization technologies, the company wants to reduce environmental impact.

Aquatim targets are focused on improving regional services, satisfying the affordability of tariffs. The general objectives of the company are presented below:

- Provision of regional water supply services and sewerage according to high quality standards, infrastructure development without compromising limited natural resources, the environment, health and safety of all interests partners.
- Services of water supply and sewerage in terms of regularity, efficiency, economy and effectiveness in protecting public funds against losses due errors, waste, abuse or fraud.
- Ensuring the reliability of internal and external information used in Aquatim SA or disseminated by third parties through an appropriate accounting system and protect documents against fraud ( concealment of theft and distortion of results).
- Development and maintenance of systems for collecting, storing, processing, updating and dissemination of data and financial information and management as well as systems and procedures adequate public information through periodical reports.

➤ Ensure the development activities of the company in accordance with obligations imposed by laws and regulations, and compliance with internal policies.

European Union assign funds for extension and enlargement of water infrastructure in order to support water reform. The condition to access all these grants is to keep the unique tariff.

In this sense unique tariff means that the customers from the supply area of a regional operating company will pay a equal price in order to receive a treatment according to the objectives of the European Union – accessibility and rightness.

Aquatim in this sense applied for major investment programs through external funds.

In this regard, in 2001 has set up a specialised department for applying for investment programs through grants. The composite of the department is made up of specialists in the field of sewerage and water infrastructure, economists, translators and public relations officers. The purpose of the department is to apply for grants, and also to implement projects, monitor them and raise awareness regarding European grants.

In 2002, when the ISPA (Instrument of Structural Policies of pre-Accession) measure no.2000/RO/16/P/PE/004 by which the European Union contributes to the „Rehabilitation of the wastewater treatment technology and improving the sewerage system for the city of Timisoara, situated in the Timis County in Romania” ,the efforts of this department have been rewarded. This structural instrument assign a budget of 45.36 mil. Euro, out of which 71% represents the structural instrument grant. Aquatim ensured co-financing by its own funds and by an BERD loan.

Aquatim applied also for the improvement of the water and sewerage infrastructure in the Timiș County, financed from the Cohesion Fund. The application was prepared within the ISPA Measure 2000/RO/16/P/PE/004 – “Technical assistance for strengthening institutional capacity for the regionalisation of the water and sewerage services in the Timiș County”. The project “The Extension and Modernisation of the Water and Sewerage System in the Timiș County” has a value of 118,871,000 Euro and an implementation period between 2011 and 2014.

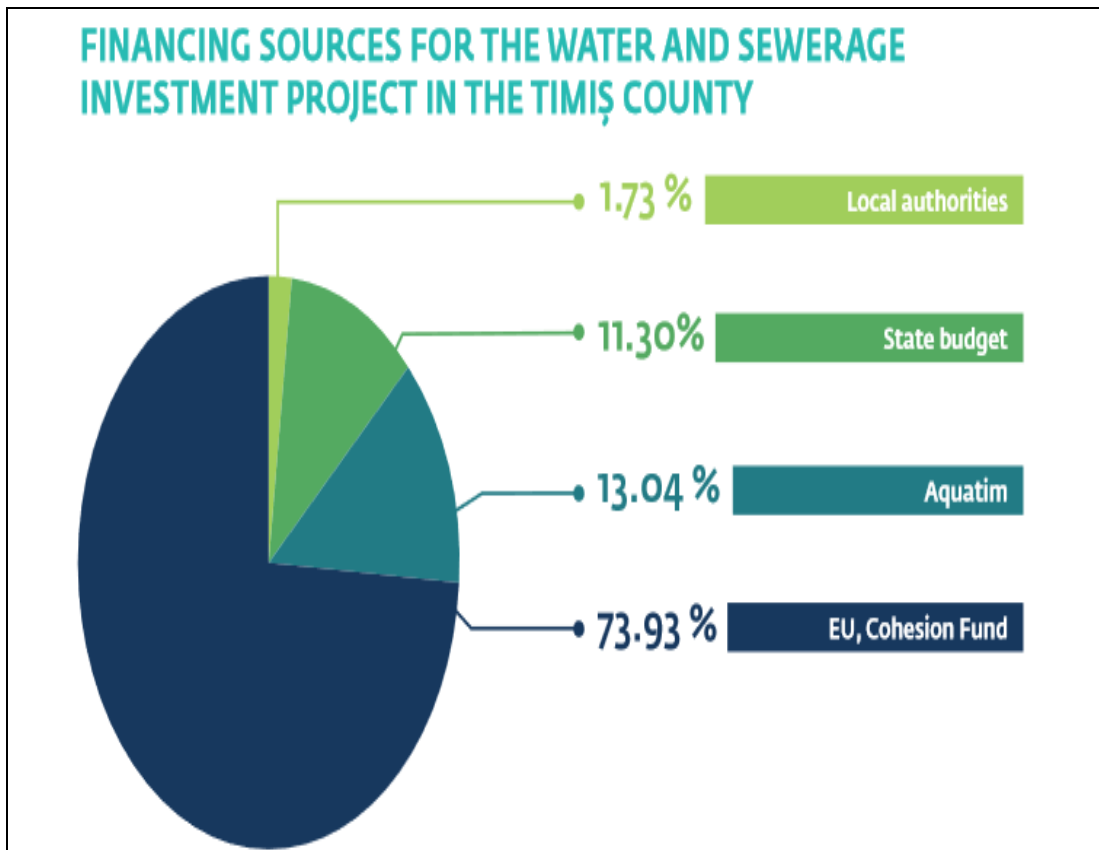
The project “Extension and upgrading of the water supply and sewerage systems in the Timiș county” financing sources:

- the European Union, a Cohesion Fund grant – 73.93%
- Aquatim – 13.04%
- the state budget – 11.30%
- the local authorities – 1.73%

The investment works in the Timis County include:

- the extension and rehabilitation of 200 km waste water networks and 100 km water supply networks
- the construction of seven waste water treatment plants and three water treatment plants in 12 locations in the Timis County

The localities included in the project are: Buziaș, Ciacova, Deta, Făget, Gătaia, Jimbolia, Recaș, Săcălaz, Sânmihaiu Român, Sânnicolau Mare, Timișoara and Utvin.



**Figure 1 Financing sources for water and sewerage investment project in the Timis Conty**

Through these financing instruments Aquatim follows respecting the Treaty of Accession to the EU to provide basic infrastructure through systems of water supply and sewerage in all towns and villages of the operating area beneficiend of work and quality in order to fulfill its duties regarding protection environmental commitments as a member state of the European Union.

Pricing policy for water services and sewerage is uniform throughout the area operare. In chart below is the ranking tariffs at national level, presented in graphical form.

Aquatim continues the tradition of attracting grants for the rehabilitation, modernization and expansion of water infrastructure. Also, besides investments attracted through financial exercise, financed from the Cohesion Fund, Aquatim attracted new nonrefundable fundings for the period 2014-2020, with a value of 150 millions euro.



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