

# Mainstreaming New European Bauhaus for green innovation transformation in Romanian Regions – insights into South Muntenia Region

Nicoleta TOPÎRCEANU,

*SNSPA Student, Bucharest, Romania*

[nicoletatopirceanu@yahoo.com](mailto:nicoletatopirceanu@yahoo.com), [nicoleta.topirceanu.22@student.politice.ro](mailto:nicoleta.topirceanu.22@student.politice.ro)

## Abstract

As a creative and interdisciplinary initiative launched by the European Commission in 2020, the New European Bauhaus (NEB) aims to connect the European Green Deal with the space and life experience of the European citizen, giving him a cultural and creative dimension. Also, the NEB aims to support and accelerate the green transition of settlements and regions, societies and economy, the main objective being to integrate the values and principles promoted in policy-making at European and national level in order to bring positive changes at local level and improve people's quality of life. The paper provides a brief history of the concept, its actual European context, and the mechanisms for integrating the values and principles promoted in policy preparation at European, national and regional level. An important section of this paper is dedicated to a case study that explores compatibility, integration of the NEB concept and integrated approach to potential actions financed at the level of the South Muntenia Region in Romania. The paper also presents good practices regarding the concept. The paper is based on communications, reports, presentations and guidelines from the European Commission regarding the launch of the concept, the compass on the objectives and ambitions of the initiative, funding conditions, and also progress since its launch and to date. Thus, I have studied the documents presented by the European Commission and available on the website dedicated to the NEB initiative, the national legislation that integrates the concept as a priority at the level of relevant strategies. To determine the extent to which the NEB concept has been integrated into funding programmes and what actions are foreseen, I analyzed programmatic documents at regional level in Romania, particularly from South Muntenia Region. The results show that the NEB has become a catalyst for the European Green Deal transformation, a movement with an active and growing community in all EU Member States and beyond, including Romania. At the same time, thanks to broad funding from various EU programmes, NEB has begun to implement real change in the field. The paper can be useful to local, regional and managing authorities as well as citizens and people from various backgrounds (art and design, culture and cultural heritage institutions, educators, scientists and innovators) because it is a guide to support the NEB initiative that brings together sustainable development, inclusion and aesthetics.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, together, beautiful, nature, participation.

## 1. Introduction

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is a creative and interdisciplinary initiative launched by the European Commission in 2020. This initiative aims to connect the European Green Deal with the space and life experience of the European citizen, giving him a cultural and creative dimension. Thus, The NEB promotes the green transition of societies and economy, the main objective being the integration of the values and principles promoted in policy making at European and national level. in order to bring positive changes at local level and improve people's quality of life. The New European Bauhaus aims at creating a new lifestyle that matches sustainability with good design, that needs less carbon and that is inclusive and affordable for all, while respecting the diversity that we have in Europe and beyond.

The New European Bauhaus aims to promote projects driving tangible transformation on the ground, from homes and neighbourhoods to urban and rural areas, to physical and virtual meeting spaces.

## **2. Brief history**

The German word bauhaus (bau – to build and haus – house) designates a school of art, design and architecture, as well as an extremely influential artistic current that combines architectural elements, plastic arts, design, furniture and interior decoration of the XX century. The school was founded in 1919 in Weimar, Germany, by Walter Gropius.

This school and artistic movement functioned between 1919 and 1933 in three German cities, Weimar, Dessau and Berlin, becoming one of the most important and inspiring currents of modern architecture. After 1933 the school was closed as a result of Nazi pressure [1].

After the immigration into the United States of America of the founders of the Bauhaus School, in 1937 this artistic movement experienced a revival under the generic name of “The New Bauhaus”, when it was founded, for a short time in Chicago, a new design school in order to improve the quality of local cultural and economic life [2]. It later merged with the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Also in 1950, in Ulm, Germany, was set up „The Design High School” which had the same destination, “The New Bauhaus” [3].

These new impulses were classified as “International Styles”, marked by the absence of decors and a strict connection between function and design.

The New Bauhaus has become an educative, inspiring and stimulating factor for many generations of architects and fine artists, who have propagated or still propagates the essence of the original Bauhaus style to this day.

The Bauhaus buildings in Weimar and Dessau were inscribed in 1996 on the UNESCO list of world cultural heritage [4].

## **3. European context**

In September 2020, just one year after the centenary of Bauhaus, the President of the European Commission published an article aimed at relaunching a far-reaching cultural concept, the New European Bauhaus concept to represent a space for the shared creativity of architects and artists, engineers and designers, as it happened in the legendary schools of Weimar, Dessau and Berlin in the period between the two world wars [5].

The initiative is part of the overall objective of the European Green Deal, to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, as well as the objective of the Wave of Renovation Strategy to make the existing built fund more efficient [6] [7].

This statement has aroused great interest among design disciplines, especially in the academic world. Starting from these premises, the European Commission invited all European citizens to imagine and build together “a sustainable and inclusive future, that's nice for the eyes, mind and soul” [8].

Thus, on September 15, 2021, the European Commission communication was adopted which introduced the concept “New European Bauhaus – Beautiful, Sustainable, Together”.

NEB expresses the European Union's objective of creating beautiful, sustainable and inclusive products, lifestyles and places. This concept promotes a new way of life in which style intertwines with sustainability, being a catalyst for the green transition of our societies and our economy. Its aim is to transform different sectors of the economy, in particular the built-in fund, so that they contribute to climate objectives and improve the quality of life of all citizens.

#### **4. New European Bauhaus concept**

The NEB concept aims to provide all citizens access to low-carbon and circular economy goods that support nature regeneration and the protection of biodiversity.

As part of the European Green Deal, the NEB has the role of addressing current issues such as climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, in conditions of tangible sustainability and taking into account these realities when designing living spaces for European citizens. The NEB is intended to be a bridge between two worlds: on the one hand, that of science and technology, on the other hand, that of art and culture, thus bringing the idea of transversality in the current era.

To achieve its goal, the NEB integrates three inseparable core values (Fig. 1a):

- **Sustainability**, from climate objectives to circularity, zero pollution reduction and protection of biodiversity. Thus, it supports the reduction of the impact of human activities on the environment and aims to reconnect citizens with nature by reducing the use of resources and pollution, promoting circularity, climate neutrality, etc, ecological design and nature-based solutions, as well as the promotion of economic activities that respect the limits of natural resources;
- **Aesthetics**, quality of experience and style beyond functionality. It promotes non-intrusive approaches that capitalize on local beauty and style, local authenticity and identity, integrates landscape, uses aesthetic and cultural means that lead to increased sense of belonging;
- **Inclusion**, valuing diversity, ensuring equality for all, accessibility and affordable prices. Actions should promote a sense of belonging, solidarity, give a “sens” to places and communities, remove barriers of accessibility, connect different entities and people.

Healthy and affordable housing involves “energy consumption, materials and water, quality and value of buildings, health, comfort, resilience to climate change and life cycle costs”.

Thus, a building-oriented approach is needed, towards the development and sustainability of the civil engineering sector and planning, using nature-based solutions.

The NEB also introduces three key principles (Fig. 1b):

- A participatory approach. It is recommended to involve communities („stakeholders”) in the phases of project design, decision-making and implementation, promoting collective thinking. Therefore, the participatory approach aims to involve civil society and people of all ages, in all their diversity, including disadvantaged women and groups (people at higher risk of poverty, marginalisation and/or discrimination) [9];
- A transdisciplinary approach. It is the principle that conveys the original Bauhaus concept, that of creating a bridge between different viewpoints and fields, culture and technology, innovation and design, engineering, handicrafts, and arts and science, between the local and global dimensions;
- A multilevel approach: from global to local. According to this principle, actions that connect the global level with the local one are promoted – global challenges such as climate change that find their response in small-scale projects/ initiatives, formulated by people, neighbourhoods, local communities and generate an effective exchange both horizontally (with people having similar projects) and vertically (with others operating on a different scale). The goal is to produce transferable and scalable solutions.

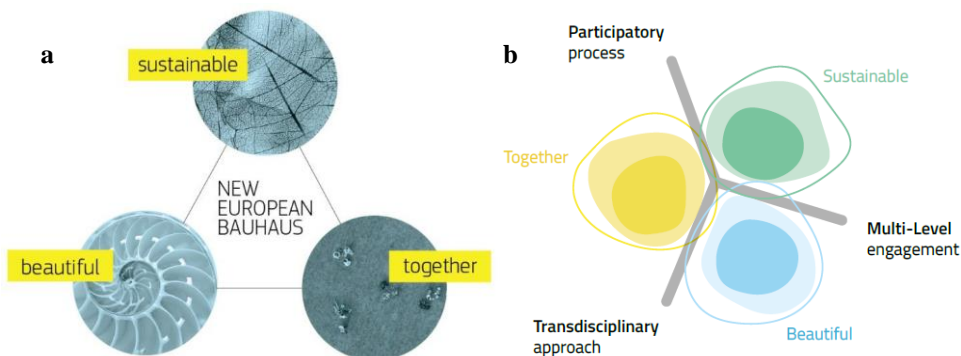


Fig. 1. (a) NEB Values; (b) NEB principles  
 Source: *New European Bauhaus Compass*, 2022,

[https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/document/405245f4-6859-4090-b145-1db88f91596d\\_en](https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/document/405245f4-6859-4090-b145-1db88f91596d_en)

The engagement of stakeholders in co-creation of the movement has provided four thematic axes [10]:

- Reconnecting with nature – renovation of existing buildings and public spaces in a spirit of circularity and carbon neutrality, greater opportunities for contact with green public spaces translate into better health indices for the population and reduce income-related health inequalities, nature-based solutions in cities can help addressing floods and other extreme weather events while making the built environment more attractive, building urban green corridors for active mobility and rethinking transport infrastructure;
- Regaining the sense of belonging – preservation and transformation of cultural heritage. Cultural assets (heritage, arts, local craft, know how, etc.), natural assets (landscapes, natural resources, etc.) as well as social assets (social economy

enterprises, local organisations and associations etc.) make a place unique. Cultural life, arts events, concerts are opportunities for connection and social interaction, the binding element that creates a sense of belonging;

- Prioritizing the places and people most in need – adaptation and transformation of buildings for affordable housing solutions. Due consideration should be given to the specific situation of groups and individuals who are the most vulnerable, for instance, at risk of exclusion or poverty or experiencing homelessness. A Design for All approach is to be pursued in order to remove accessibility barriers to the built and virtual environments and to goods and services. This calls for territorial development avoiding spatial segregation of social groups, connections between rural and urban areas, delivering access to digital connectivity to all people is an essential in the green transition [11];
- The need for long-term life cycle thinking in the industrial ecosystem – regeneration, life extension and transformation of existing buildings should be prioritised over the construction of new buildings, recovered and renewable materials should be better recognised by all relevant disciplines and become part of design paradigms. The use of sustainably produced and procured nature-based building materials, such as wood, bamboo, straw, cork or stone should be improved, new production technologies should help reduce the carbon footprint of steel or cement, recycle otherwise wasted textiles and accelerate the green transition of energy intensive industries, new business models, bioeconomy, social economy approaches and design for sustainability can support the transformation of sectors such as textiles, tourism, waste management or energy production [12].

## **5. Mechanisms for transposing the values and principles of the initiative**

The European Commission wants to create an enabling framework of the New European Bauhaus, integrated with the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and with relevant EU policies and initiatives. Thus, is proposing specific actions and tools in order to promote, and disseminate the NEB concept.

Such tools are: NEB Laboratory [13] for policy making, promotion of funding for NEB projects, financing of social housing projects aligned with NEB values, preparation of calls for projects for citizens' and start-ups' initiatives, etc, as well as an annual festival for awarding the best NEB projects.

Within the NEB Laboratory, an important project is the NEB Labelling Strategy [14] that will be conducted on two interdependent levels: the compass and the NEB (self)assessment tools.

Regarding the NEB (self)assessment tools [15], they are specific lists of measurable criteria for certain types of projects.

The NEB compass [16] provides a framework for policymakers and project promoters to implement NEB principles and criteria in their activities.

Specifically, the compass: exemplifies the meaning of “beautiful, sustainable, together”, on three levels of ambition (I, II, III) (Fig. 2) meant to inspire and guide the conception of a project from the very first stages; details the three core principles that define NEB work also on three levels of ambition (I, II, III) (Fig.3): participatory process, multi-level engagement and a transdisciplinary approach; emphasises the ability of NEB projects to promote new visions and processes with a long-term vision; builds on existing theories and models while remaining open to the prospect of evolving, in tune with the experimental nature of the initiative.

Level I of ambition sets out the mandatory basic rules for framing projects under the NEB category, and levels II and III indicate higher aspirations. An NEB project is that project that achieves at least the first level of ambition for the three values and the three principles. Achieving the highest levels of ambition for each value and principle leads to the initiation of a profound transformation of the way in which society is organized and requires full compliance with the requirements for levels I and II.

### **5.1. Sustainability:**

- I. Reuse: reuse to avoid/ reduce environmental impact by reducing pollution, minimal use of resources, materials and energy.
- II. Closing the loop: reducing linear processes or turning them into circular processes the target being zero pollution.
- III. Regeneration: paradigm shift towards regeneration and the use of nature-based solutions.

### **5.2. Aesthetics:**

- I. Activation: improving the physical and mental state of people, promoting the cultural, social and natural qualities of a place to create unique and positive experiences.
- II. Connection: facilitating meaningful social interactions and collective experiences, strengthening the sense of belonging.
- III. Integration: stimulating creativity, collective reinvention of places, lifestyle, community, integration of new cultural and social values, creating meaningful experiences that contribute to the creation of a more comprehensive “us”.

### **5.3. Inclusion:**

- I. Inclusion: non-discriminatory accessibility (physical, cultural, cognitive, psychological, etc.).
- II. Consolidation: promoting relationships between users and/or communities, open access to services.
- III. Transformation: potential to overcome outdated social models, create value and bring transformative societal benefits, influencing worldview, social paradigms and behaviors.

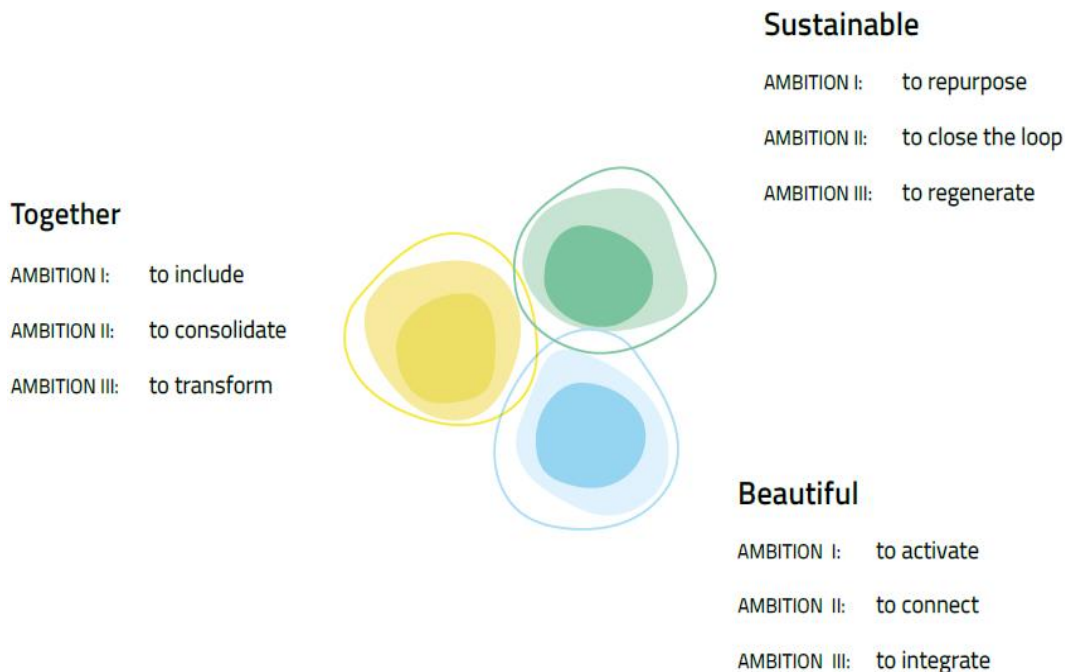


Fig. 2. The ambition levels of the NEB values

Source: *New European Bauhaus Compass*, 2022,

[https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/document/405245f4-6859-4090-b145-1db88f91596d\\_en](https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/document/405245f4-6859-4090-b145-1db88f91596d_en)

#### 5.4. Participatory process:

- I. Consulting: sending information about the project, consultation for decision making.
- II. Co-development: involving stakeholders as key partners in setting project objectives based on a dynamic flow of information.
- III. Self-government: empowering communities to make decisions and self-government.

#### 5.5. Transdisciplinary approach:

- I. Multidisciplinarity: addressing a common problem by stimulating multidisciplinary work.
- II. Interdisciplinarity: addressing a common problem or problem targeting two or more areas of knowledge stimulating interdisciplinary work.
- III. Overcoming disciplinarity: collaborative approach between local, traditional and academic knowledge holders in order to complement and transform scientific perspectives for the benefit of society.

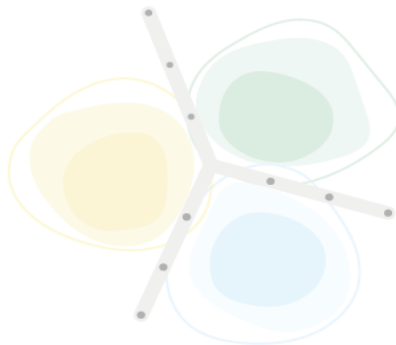
#### 5.6 Multi-level approach

- I. Local interventions: horizontal connection between informal networks (groups of people, neighbourhoods, etc.) and/or formal institutions (sectoral departments, political groups, etc.) in order to create a local living environment through a place-specific approach.

- II. Multiple approach: vertical connection between informal networks and/or formal institutions at different scales in order to overcome their own dimension (local, regional, national).
- III. Global perspective: multi-level structured engagement and linking local strategies to a global network taking into account the broader global impact of initiatives.

**Participatory process**

- AMBITION I: to consult
- AMBITION II: to co-develop
- AMBITION III: to self-govern



**Multi-level engagement**

- AMBITION I: to work locally
- AMBITION II: to work across levels
- AMBITION III: to work globally

**Transdisciplinary approach**

- AMBITION I: to be multidisciplinary
- AMBITION II: to be interdisciplinary
- AMBITION III: to be beyond-disciplinary

Fig. 3. The ambition levels of the NEB working principles

Source: *New European Bauhaus Compass, 2022,*

[https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/document/405245f4-6859-4090-b145-1db88f91596d\\_en](https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/document/405245f4-6859-4090-b145-1db88f91596d_en)

**6. The power of examples**

Only two years after its launch, the NEB has become a catalyst for the European Green Deal transformation. At the same time, thanks to a broad funding from different EU programmes, the NEB has started to implement real change on the ground.

The first call for projects was launched in 2021 [17], in 2022 the winners of the NEB awards were nominated and in 2023 other winners will be chosen. A few examples to highlight the inclusion of the NEB initiative are given below.

The Cano de Hierro project (Spain) [18] proposed the creation of a promenade using natural reed formwork to reproduce the irregular shape of the caves, and the color is in tune with that of the rocks (Fig. 4).





Fig. 4. The Cano de Hierro project, Spain

Source: European Union, Prizes, 2021, <https://2021.prizes.new-european-bauhaus.eu/node/268908>

Baubotanik, Germany [19], is an innovative form of sustainable architecture that partially replaces technological building materials with living, growing trees. Baubotanik structures continue to develop throughout their lives, evolving with nature (Fig.5).



Fig. 5. Baubotanik, Germany project

Source: European Union, Prizes, 2021, [Baubotanik – Living Architecture / NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS \(new-european-bauhaus.eu\)](https://2021.prizes.new-european-bauhaus.eu/node/268908)

The wooden pavilion in Buga, Germany [20], highlights a new approach to wooden constructions, based on digital design, in a public event space with a diameter of 30 meters, the pavilion can be reassembled in another place, and at the end of its life the structure can be recycled (Fig.6).



Fig. 6. The wooden pavilion in Buga, Germany project

Source: European Union, Prizes, 2021, [BUGA Wood Pavilion | NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS \(new-european-bauhaus.eu\)](https://www.new-european-bauhaus.eu)

The modular construction system Vivihouse [21], Austria, consists of modular wooden frames assembled with durable materials. The project invites users, planners, artisans and businesses to adopt the modular system and collaborate on exploring new forms of urbanism within the circular economy (Fig.7).



Fig. 7. The modular construction system Vivihouse project

Source: European Union, Prizes, 2021, [vivihouse | NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS \(new-european-bauhaus.eu\)](https://www.new-european-bauhaus.eu)

Cristobal de Moura Green Street [22], Barcelona, Spain, is a park-like project that includes affordable public housing and gives people with low economic resources the opportunity to enjoy life in a park-like environment (Fig.8).



Fig. 8. Cristobal de Moura Green Street project

Source: European Union, Prizes, 2021, <https://2021.prizes.new-european-bauhaus.eu/node/269172>

Four Romanian projects applied for the NEB awards and were considered successful at national level: Healthy Places [23] (through which Timisoara regained two community gardens that act as places for dialogue, experimentation with sustainable principles and local exchange of knowledge) (Fig.9), ROD [24] (physical transformation of the built environment in Piatra Neamt) (Fig.10), Click on Romania [25] (donating computers to schools in vulnerable areas) and Metakitchen [26] (a nationwide project that brings together Romanian practices addressing gastronomy, textiles, ceramics and production of building materials).

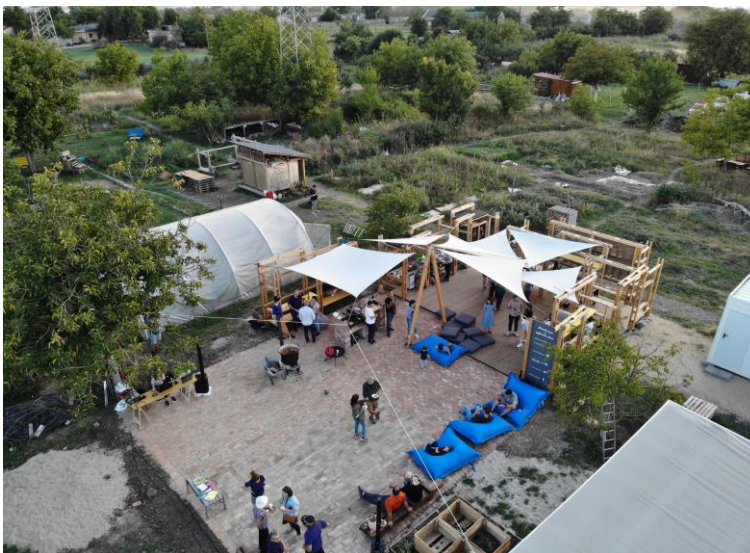


Fig. 9. Healthy Places project, Timisoara, Romania

Source: European Union, Prizes, 2021, [Healthy Places | NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS \(new-european-bauhaus.eu\)](https://2021.prizes.new-european-bauhaus.eu/node/269172)



Fig. 10. ROD project, Piatra Neamt, Romania

Source: European Union, Prizes, 2021, <https://2022.prizes.new-european-bauhaus.eu/application/rod>

## 7. NEB at national level

Romania welcomes the European Commission's initiative on the approach and actions proposed for the NEB: beautiful, sustainable and together. In this respect, the Decision no.10 of 15 February 2022 [27] was adopted, recommending to integrate the objectives of increasing disaster resilience in the NEB, the relevance of artisanal techniques and the maintenance of traditional construction solutions in rural areas is emphasized, and also the responsible systematization of the areas intended for constructions in order to support traditional social approaches and relationships in communities, such as multigenerational housing. The Decision also stipulates that the NEB's development strategy should have distinct objectives for preserving soil biodiversity and expanding urban green areas.

At the same time, the concept was introduced as a priority and development direction within the National Strategy on Education for Environment and Climate Change 2023-2030 [28], as well as within the framework of the National Housing Strategy For The Period 2022-2050 [29].

In 2022, The European Commission achieved an increased commitment of Romania, as well as from the other Member States, to support NEB in Cohesion Policy Programmes, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) being one of the funds that encourage the concept of NEB. Romania included NEB references in the programmes as a result. This fact paves the way to mainstreaming NEB's implementation in Romania, at the regional and local level during the 2021-2027 period [30]. Specific operational programmes already foresee support to NEB projects, such as Regional Programmes approved by the European Commission [31].

Since 2021, with the process of decentralization of regional development, 8 Regional Programmes were needed, one for each development region in Romania: North-East Regional Programme, South-East Regional Programme, South-Muntenia Regional Programme, South-West Regional Programme, West Regional Programme, North-West Regional Programme, Centre Regional Programme and Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Programme. All these 8 Regional Programmes, supported by ERDF, one of the Cohesion Policy's shared management funds, foresee support to NEB projects, for instance:

North-West Regional Programme: *“PR NV will take into account the NEB initiative to implement the European Green Deal and create affordable, sustainable and quality housing places through the collaboration and interoperability of art, science and culture, encouraging investments that successfully combine the principles of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion (according to the NEB initiative), in order to find affordable, inclusive, sustainable and attractive solutions to climate challenges.”* [32].

South-West Regional Programme: *“The programme will encourage investments that successfully combine the principles of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusiveness of the New European Bauhaus initiative, with the aim of finding solutions to climate challenges.”* [33].

West Regional Programme: *“The PRV will encourage the partnership principle inherent in the NEB initiative and will allocate resources to the preparation of NEB projects in consultation with stakeholders.”* [34].

North-East Regional Programme: *“PR promotes intervention „ New European Bauhaus (NEB)” which operates the European Ecological Pact, supporting investments on OS b(i) and e(i) which successfully combine the principles of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion of the NEB in order to find solutions to climate change.”* [35].

South-East Regional Programme: *“...the interventions will take into account the NEB initiative to develop and implement projects with a participatory and transdisciplinary approach.”* [36].

Centre Regional Programme: *“Support will be given to investments that successfully combine the principles of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusiveness of the NEB initiative, with the aim of finding affordable, inclusive, sustainable and attractive solutions to climate challenges.”* [37].

Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Programme: *“The promotion of the NEB principles, implementing the European Green Deal, will be achieved by supporting the construction of new public buildings NZEB+ with a demonstrative role as well as for the actions aimed at conservation, protection and sustainable valorisation of cultural heritage and infrastructures for cultural activities. Thus, PR BI will support, under OS b (i), OS e(i) and OS e(ii), interventions that combine the principles of sustainable development, social inclusion, aesthetics, and, in harmony with nature and the environment so as to meet the needs of users.”* [38].

## **8. Insights into South Muntenia Region- South-Muntenia Regional Programme. How does the programme contribute to the implementation of the NEB initiative?**

As a strategy, the South-Muntenia Regional Programme 2021-2027 supports beneficiaries to use nature-based integrated solutions in space planning, urban design to encourage more efficient use and restoration of existing ecosystems and/or creating new ecosystems: *“The programme supports investments that successfully combine the principles of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusiveness of the NBE initiative in order to find affordable, inclusive, sustainable and attractive solutions to climate challenges”* [39].

Within the South-Muntenia Regional Programme 2021-2027 there are a number of priorities, specific objectives and actions compatible with the NEB concept.

Thus, within Priority 2, Specific Objective 2.1 of the program energy efficiency and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions are promoted through investments in public and residential buildings (also individual and social housing) in order to ensure/improving energy efficiency.

Under Priority 2, Specific Objective 2.7 of the program are foreseen actions to protect and conserve nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure and reduce all forms of pollution through: creating public parks and gardens, urban forests, botanical gardens, restoring the ecosystem in the form of natural and semi-natural green spaces, creating blue-green corridors through rehabilitation, regularization, dredging and arrangement of rivers, lakes and canals with the aim of ensuring sustainable use for pedestrians, cyclists, educational activities, etc., and the creation of habitats for biodiversity.

Within Priority 6, Specific Objectives 5.1 and 5.2, there is support for integrated and inclusive development that encompasses social, economic and environmental fields, as well as culture and natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, both urban and non-urban areas through actions regarding protection, conservation and sustainable valorisation of cultural heritage, investments in buildings intended for public use for cultural and recreational activities, with the aim of creating, improving or extending basic public services, urban regeneration investments in public use spaces, and setting up tourist routes and recreation areas using environmentally friendly solutions.

Through the above mentioned actions, the South-Muntenia Regional Programme 2021-2027 contributes to the implementation of the NEB concept, within the 4 thematic axes of the NEB initiative: renovation of existing buildings and public spaces in the spirit of carbon neutrality and circularity; conservation and transformation of cultural heritage; adapting and transforming buildings for affordable housing solutions; regeneration of urban or rural areas.

The above programme's actions and concrete projects will help promote the three values of NEB (sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion) and the three principles (participatory, transdisciplinary, multi-level approach).

Sustainability is supported through: the use of environmentally friendly insulation (wood fibre, hemp fibre, cork, cellulose, wool, jute, basaltic mineral wool) which reduce the need for electricity and are recyclable materials supporting circularity, solar roofs that provide electricity and reduce carbon emissions, green roofs/green walls/vertical gardens that contribute to the regulation of indoor temperature, air purification, create support for biodiversity, materials recovered in the arrangement, regeneration and greening of areas, permeable pavement.

Aesthetics is supported through: green roofs /green walls /vertical gardens that improve urban aesthetics; green-blue infrastructure ensuring visual harmony with the adjacent urban fabric; the use of suitable materials (with a low carbon footprint) which are in harmony with the local heritage and culture.

Inclusion is supported through: renovated buildings (public, residential, for cultural and recreational activities) that offer a sense of belonging and care to their users and the community; encouraging the participation of citizens, especially vulnerable groups, even as users; common spaces for physical, cultural, recreational activities that favor the interaction between residents of different ages, with different concerns, strengthen the sense of belonging to the community, and develop civic spirit.

The participatory approach is given by public consultations on the development of each project and encouraging stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process, transdisciplinary character involves collaboration between specialists from different fields (architects, builders, environmental experts, etc.) and citizens, and the multi-level approach is given by collaboration between informal groups (citizens, associations of owners, neighborhoods) and formal groups (institutions and local public authorities).

Projects proposing actions and approaches specific to the NEB initiative will be funded as a priority within the South-Muntenia Regional Program 2021-2027, and will ensure sustainability, increasing the resilience of urban/ rural spaces to climate challenges, and will also improve the quality of life of the inhabitants in the South-Muntenia Region. This priority in financing is given by the additional scoring of projects that align with the NEB concept [40] [41] [42] [43] [44] [45] [46].

## **9. Conclusions**

Climate change is a global emergency. The impact of human activity on greenhouse gas emissions and land use has compounded environmental harm and created an escalating crisis. This is our chance to build a better future.

The projects already implemented, presented in this paper, show that the NEB initiative has created beneficial results in the territory and can be an engine in terms of promoting the green transition of society and economy.

NEB will be based on the strength of the community. Cooperation of public authorities at international, national, regional and local level, including the participation of civil society, will be crucial. From promoting participatory co-design processes to being able to support the financing of local transformation projects, the NEB will require strong cooperation in this multi-level governance framework.

An integrated approach can lead to beneficial changes both locally and regionally, nationally and internationally.

Creating long-term solutions to climate change requires the participation of everybody in society. Cleaner and more efficient communities will raise the quality of life for all citizens.

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