

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003496/26
to the Commission
Thomas Waitz (Verts/ALE)
(3 September 2026)**

Subject: Romania's RRF-funded strict-protection mapping and Milestone 34

Project C2.I3.2 under the Romanian Recovery and Resilience Plan, which is funded (RON 23.49 million) through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), was designed to identify potential strict-protection areas for implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Romania's methodology states that it contributes to the EU objective of strictly protecting 10% of the country's land and sea area. However, the draft catalogue published in August 2026 covered only 2.54% of Romania; analysis of the Ministry's spatial data shows that over 90% overlaps with existing protected areas and only about 0.25% lies outside them. The final catalogue was adopted on 31 August 2026, but the complete expert mapping outputs, including excluded areas, have not been made public. The Ministry stated that Milestone 34 carries a maximum financial correction of EUR 25.69 million.

1. Before deeming Milestone 34 fulfilled, will the Commission assess the substantive conservation outcome, not merely the adoption of a legal act?
2. Will it obtain and assess all RRF-funded mapping outputs, including expert-identified areas excluded from the catalogue, and require their publication?
3. If the milestone is not satisfactorily fulfilled, will the Commission apply Article 24 of Regulation (EU) 2021/241, including suspension or proportionate reduction of funding, and require corrective measures?

Submitted: 3.9.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(2 October 2026)**

Article 24(3) of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) Regulation ⁽¹⁾ requires the Commission to assess the fulfilment of milestones and targets as set out in the Council Implementing Decision ⁽²⁾.

Milestone 34 of the Romanian recovery and resiliency plan (RRP) ⁽³⁾ requires the entry into force of a legal act for the designation of strictly protected areas identified in Natura 2000 protected areas and in additional areas. A specific outcome of this designation is not explicitly included in the milestone description.

Milestone 34 is included in the fifth payment request submitted by Romania on 15 August 2026 and is currently under assessment by the Commission.

Notwithstanding a result of the ongoing Commission assessment of Milestone 34, Romania is obligated to comply with all relevant EU *acquis* relating to conservation.

The Commission will obtain and assess all evidence necessary to determine whether Milestone 34 has been satisfactorily fulfilled. The methodology for Identifying Priority Areas for Biodiversity was published in the Official Gazette, Part I, No 468bis on 3 June 2026 ⁽⁴⁾.

Should the Commission conclude that the milestone is not satisfactorily fulfilled, this will indeed lead to a proportionate reduction of funding as set out in Article 24 of the RRF Regulation and according to the procedure detailed in the Guidelines for Member States on operational aspects related to the final phase and closure of the RRF ⁽⁵⁾ published by the Commission on 30 April 2026.

⁽¹⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/241/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ https://reforms-investments.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9d2c6dd2-47e3-4ec4-80f8-4c1e7f43983c_en?filename=2026-07-20-Council%20Implementing%20Decision.pdf.

⁽³⁾ https://reforms-investments.ec.europa.eu/recovery-and-resilience-facility-1/country-pages/romania-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en.

⁽⁴⁾ The document is available on the website <https://monitoruloficial.ro/>.

⁽⁵⁾ https://reforms-investments.ec.europa.eu/publications-0/guidelines-member-states-operational-aspects-related-final-phase-and-closure-recovery-and-resilience_en.