



■ In Profile – Angela Sima, Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation (RoAid)



Angela Sima has been working as a counsellor within RoAid's - the Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation - Programmes Department since 2018. She is currently in charge of the relationship with OECD-DAC and holds the role of focal point for various international networks that RoAid is a member of like the Practitioners' Network for European Development Cooperation or the DeLoG Network. She has great experience in working with civil society organizations, in project management and the implementation of development projects. She is a graduate of the Management Faculty of the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest.

Dear **Angela**,

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions today and for providing our readers with an insight into RoAid's work.

In July DeLoG hosted its 15th Annual Meeting. At the meeting RoAid was accepted as a new member of the DeLoG Network. Please tell us about RoAid's interest in becoming a DeLoG member and how RoAid's work relates to the goals and activities of the Network?

I first met some of the DeLoG members during the Annual Meeting of the Learn4Dev Network, in May 2019. I was impressed to see a community of actors from different institutions involved in development cooperation sharing their expertise and keen to learn from their peers. Thus, we accepted the invitation to join the Network with great interest.

RoAid places great emphasis on partnerships and opportunities to learn from other institutions and organisations. In this context, we seek to learn as much as possible from the extensive experience of the other DeLoG members.

We knew that becoming a member of the DeLoG Network would give us the opportunity to lay the groundwork for future collaboration with other organisations and institutions regarding topics of common interest. In this respect, RoAid is particularly interested in further deepening its understanding of decentralisation and local governance as a means of supporting the objectives of good governance and sustainable economic development, as well as to explore the possibility of expanding its current initiatives in this field.

Founded in 2017 RoAid is still a comparatively young organisation. Please give us an insight into RoAid's work and tell us why decentralisation and local governance is relevant to your projects and portfolio?

RoAid builds on local approaches and places great value on the engagement of local partners. Also, RoAid does not address specifically the issues of local governance and decentralisation in its projects,



most of the projects are provided at a decentralized level, in partnerships with local institutions. In this respect, please find below some examples:

- Knowledge transfer missions for the benefit of the Republic of Moldova, were provided by Romanian experts in the field of local development through the creation of Local Action Groups and via the accession of European funds;
- In partnership with the private sector, RoAid has supported the elaboration of various studies on topics related to DLG, such as Smart and Sustainable Urban Development in Lusaka, Zambia, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the Development of the National Public Health System and Municipal waste recovery facilities in Tanzania.

Romania has been classified as a so-called “emerging donor”. What does the country’s development strategy look like and how is RoAid involved in its implementation?

Romania’s development cooperation programme was officially launched in 2007, following the country’s accession to the European Union (EU). Since then, Romania has positioned itself as an emerging donor, with the main comparative advantage of being able to share its recent transition experience and knowledge in the Euro-Atlantic integration processes.

Romania’s development co-operation objective is focused on the eradication of extreme poverty and global security by promoting socio-economic sustainability and effectiveness through international co-operation. Romania’s development co-operation is mostly focused on countries in its vicinity – the Eastern Partnership countries and Southern neighbourhood, with a volume of official development assistance (ODA) that has steadily increased. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-ordinates Romania’s development co-operation and humanitarian aid policy at the national level. Regulated by Law No. 213/2016 and operational since 2018, RoAid is the national development institution responsible for implementing projects and programmes in the field of international development co-operation and humanitarian aid.

The implementation of the Annual Plan for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance is possible in two modalities, through direct implementation – expertise transfer in partnership with the Romanian public institutions, purchasing of goods and services and donations- or indirect implementation - by awarding grants or voluntary contributions to international organizations.

Romania’s transition toward democracy and a market economy resembles that of many countries in Eastern Europe. What role do you attribute to decentralisation and local governance in this context?

The strategic objectives pursued according to the programmatic documents of the Romanian development cooperation and humanitarian assistance are:

- Sharing Romania's own transition experience;
- Providing humanitarian assistance and supporting peace and security;
- Increasing cooperation with the private sector and civil society;
- Promoting transparency and public communication.

The thematic priorities aim at developing institutional capacity and the rule of law, emergency management and resilience to natural disasters, reconstruction and post-conflict resilience, development of sustainable agriculture, energy transition to green energy, sustainable water and sanitation systems, urban development smart, ensuring quality medical services.

The Agency’s activities aim at contributing to Agenda 2030 and are aligned to the national priorities of promoting good governance and inclusive societies. In this context, RoAid recognizes the important role played by decentralisation and local governance for sustainable development.



RoAid supports both former Socialist countries in Eastern Europe as well as partners from Latin America, Africa and the Middle East with its projects. What kind of assistance do you provide and what are the challenges you face? How will your perspective on project implementation benefit the DeLoG Network?

RoAid provides direct assistance to its partner countries in sectors where its support can have maximum impact and can either be implemented as standalone projects, can be complimentary to the ongoing initiatives of other development cooperation partners, or can reflect Romania's comparative advantages and are based on the needs and demands of the partner country.

An example of its instruments is the Mobility Fund that facilitates the transfer of Romanian experts and expertise with the purpose to meet the needs of partner countries for development cooperation in sectors where Romania can bring added value. Visits and trainings within the framework of the Mobility Fund are focused on sectors such as: energy, anti-corruption, city infrastructure and local development, use of European funds, emergency situations services and the importance of new technologies. In this context, training missions were organized with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Department for Emergency Situations), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Romanian Diplomatic Institute, the Competition Council of Romania in the benefit of partner states such as: Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Zambia, Tanzania, Egypt, Montenegro, Tunisia and others. During 2020, due to the pandemic, it was not possible to organise exchange missions anymore, even if there were demands from partner countries.

RoAid was involved in development assistance and humanitarian assistance projects, in post-disaster reconstruction following the Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean, strengthening hurricane resilience in Cuba, training on disaster risk reduction provided by the 2018 training program for Caribbean beneficiaries and through missions to assess emergency response capabilities, organized in partnership with the Department of Emergency Situations and, last but not least, on the organization of training programs on reconstruction and post stabilization -conflict, for beneficiaries from African states, in 2018 (dedicated to Sahel) and in 2019 (for beneficiaries from sub-Saharan African states).

Furthermore, more than half of its budget is implemented through indirect modalities, such as grants award or voluntary contributions to other organizations. As RoAid places great emphasis on engaging the private sector in its development cooperation programs, starting 2018, the Agency launched an open call for the cooperation with the private sector, with the aim of expanding financing mechanisms for sustainable development and contributing to an increased reach and impact of Romania's ODA. During 2020, grants were awarded also to civil society organisations for projects aiming to tackle the effects of the pandemic and contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

At DeLoG's 15th Annual Meeting a lot of discussions focussed on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on local governance and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many participants argued that the crisis represents an opportunity to strengthen the political role and financial capacities of local governments. What were your main takeaways of this year's Annual Meeting?

As part of the Team Europe effort, RoAid will contribute to the response to COVID-19 in partner countries. The support will be dedicated to the Team Europe priorities, mainly Strengthening Health, Water and Sanitation, as well as tackling the social and economic consequences of the crisis. Most of the support provided by RoAid is channelled through local actors from the decentralized level, aimed at the further strengthening of local capacities in the fight against the COVID-19 crisis.



The Annual Meeting discussions confirmed that localising the 2030 Agenda in the implementation of development cooperation programs is both a starting point, and a point of arrival, an objective, which the RoAid Agency wants to pursue in its programs.

The participation in the General Assembly allowed the awareness of the importance of financing, including through ODA instruments of the decentralized structures at local level. RoAid continues to allocate part of its bilateral ODA through local governance institutions.

The implementation of projects in contexts of fragility must be based on a good knowledge of the institutional environment regarding the local government and the level of decentralization in order to develop successful projects with a sustainable impact.

Generally speaking, what are your expectations for the Network as a new member and what do you hope to accomplish during the upcoming years?

We believe that through our direct participation in the activities of the DeLoG Network, we can bring an important added value to it through Romania's recent transition experience and related initiatives within the international development cooperation spectrum. Furthermore, we believe that our membership would contribute to a broader geographical coverage of the Network, by bringing to the table the perspective of an Eastern European donor.

Before we close, is there anything you would like to add?

I would like to highlight the fact that RoAid greatly appreciates the mission and work of DeLoG and we look forward to making our own contribution to the exchange of know-how and best practices within the Network.