

Badea, Adriana; Fîntîneru , Alexandru; Baci, George Alexandru

Conference Paper

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Provided in Cooperation with:

The Research Institute for Agriculture Economy and Rural Development (ICEADR), Bucharest

Suggested Citation: Badea, Adriana; Fîntîneru , Alexandru; Baci, George Alexandru (2015) : The rural development program in Romania and the place of LEADER program within its, In: Agrarian Economy and Rural Development - Realities and Perspectives for Romania. 6th Edition of the International Symposium, November 2015, Bucharest, The Research Institute for Agricultural Economy and Rural Development (ICEADR), Bucharest, pp. 368-372

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/163327>

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THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN ROMANIA AND THE PLACE OF LEADER PROGRAM WITHIN ITS

BADEA ADRIANA¹, FÎNTÎNERU ALEXANDRU², GEORGE ALEXANDRU BACIU³

Summary: *The new National Rural Development Program 2014 - 2020 puts a far greater emphasis on the Leader measure through greater allocations regarding to funds towards this segment, and better partitioning through sub-measures that make up this measure. The level of rural development in Romania is very low, and the lack of measures to support the rural Romanian environmental progress fail to appear, although the Romanian village had benefited in the past from such support based on European funds. Most likely, it is the last chance for Romania to align to the rural environment to other rural areas closer to the developed countries belonging to the European Union.*

Keywords: *rural development, Leader measure, the situation of Romanian rural areas*

INTRODUCTION

The Romanian rural space is facing a number of problems of socio-economic nature, departing from the exodus of young people from rural areas to urban centers, so that the number of young people who should inherit practice of traditional crafts such as agriculture appear to be predestined to doom, and once with these their customs. Another outstanding issue is the lack of jobs, one of the reasons that maintains the exodus of young people to urban centers. At the same time the number of households receiving the minimum of comfort such as water, gas and sewerage is extremely low even today.

The role of The National Rural Development Program is ceaseless in terms of importance and the contribution it brings to rural development in Romania. This program is the equivalent of a Master Plan of road infrastructure, which means that concerns a range of measures that must be achieved in a medium or long term.

Of all the European programs Romania had reached, this managed to absorb most money from the European Union in the past programming period, namely 2007-2013.

The new Rural Development Program 2014-2020 focuses on identifying needs and treating them in a more efficient manner through a series of measures developed in this way. Rural development in PNDR's vision aims no less than 26 needs referring to the knowledge of Romanian farmers, to counseling and advice, rejuvenation of generations of farmers, clusters and agricultural producers, integrated food chains, measures to protect the environment, growth and diversifying the number of jobs, reducing poverty and the risk of social exclusion and local development through the Leader approach. Measures to combat mental shortcomings are in number 15 including:

M01 - Shares for knowledge transfer and information actions;

M02 - Advisory services, farm management services and farm replacement services;

M04 - Investments in physical assets;

M06 - Development of farms and businesses;

M07 - Basic services and village renewal in rural areas;

M08 - Investments in the development of woodlands and improving the viability of forests;

M09 - Establishment of groups and producer organizations in agriculture and forestry;

M10 - Agro-environment and climate;

M11 - Organic farming;

M13 - Payments to areas facing natural constraints or other specific constraints;

M14 - Animal welfare;

M15 - Forest-environmental services, climate services and forest conservation;

M16 - Cooperation;

¹ Drd. Badea Adriana U.S.A.M.V. București, badea_adriana09@yahoo.com

² Prof.univ.dr. Fintineru Alexandru, U.S.A.M.V. București, alexandru.fintineri@gmail.com

³ Drd., U.S.A.M.V. București

M17 - Risk management;

M19 - Support for local development LEADER.

All these measures are aimed in developing and supporting existing farms, especially those operating in rural areas. It is worth mentioning that in terms of the extent M14- "Animal welfare", dedicated to the charge of raising pigs and hens or meat birds, given that RDP 2007-2013 was extended until 2015 due to the delay in approving the RDP 2014-2020, those active in the field of pig and poultry for two years did not receive welfare support granted by measure. It seems that this will be reactivated from the next year.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researches were based on information that refer to the rural development program and place of Leader within it, through data obtained from the PNDR, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and APIA, data that can show the evolution and activity impact of Leader in Romania.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We can say that the distributions in the amounts allocated to the National Program for Rural Development, for each measure are very important because we can see the direction that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development wants to follow for the development of rural areas and the manner in which attempts to eliminate the main problems encountered in this sector.

Table no. 1.

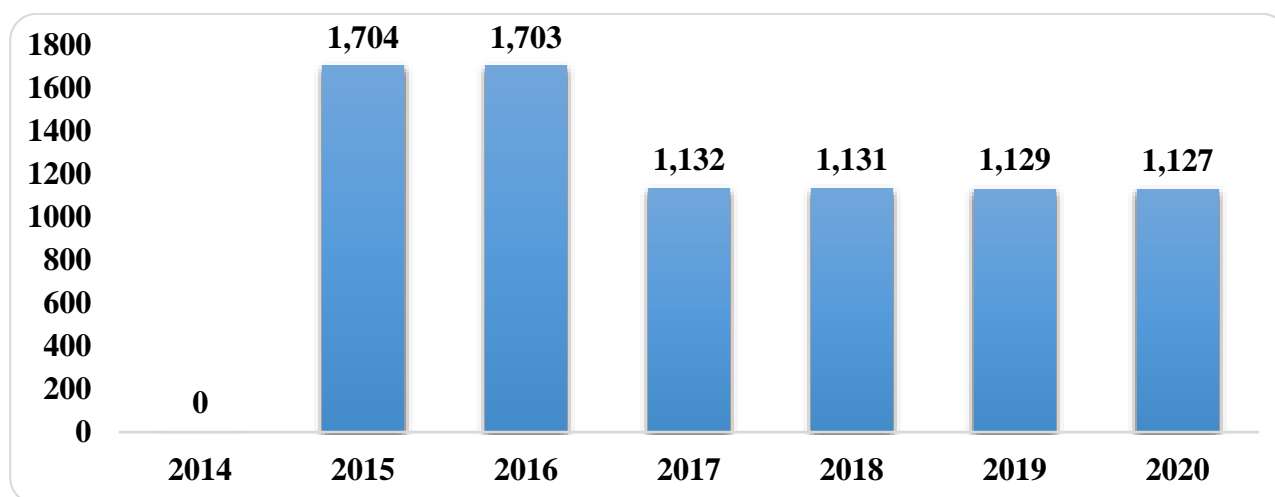
The amounts allocated to each measure related to the National Rural Development Program 2014 – 2020

Nr. Crt.	Measure	Total contribution from the European Union
1	M01 - Shares for knowledge transfer and information actions;	60.386.100
2	M02 - Advisory services, farm management services and farm replacement services;	60.386.100
3	M04 - Investments in physical assets;	2.057.028.093
4	M06 - Development of farms and businesses;	978.690.545
5	M 07 - Basic services and village renewal in rural areas;	1.100.595.249
6	M08 - Investments in the development of woodlands and improving the viability of forests;	105.695.159
7	M09 - Establishment of groups and producer organizations in agriculture and forestry	18.000.000
8	M10 - Agro-environment and climate;	909.964.916
9	M 11 - Organic farming;	200.686.161
10	M13 - Payments to areas facing natural constraints or other specific constraints;	1.150.796.418
11	M14 - Animal welfare;	437.013.969
12	M15 - Forest-environmental services, climate services and forest conservation;	100.000.000
13	M16 – Cooperation;	28.021.100
14	M17 - Risk management;	170.000.000
15	M19 - Support for local development LEADER.	572.364.672

Source: Processed data from PNDR 2014 - 2020

The most significant amounts of money have been allocated to measures relating to investments in physical assets by more than 2 billion euros (plus 750 million euros, the contributions reserved for operations falling within the scope of Article 59 para. (6) of the EU Regulation no. 1305/2013), followed by measure 13 - Payments to areas facing natural constraints or other specific constraints with a value of 1.15 billion euros and M07 - basic and renewal services villages in rural areas by 1.1 billion euros.

Graphic no. 1



Annual contributions related to EAFRD (bln. Euro)

* Source: Processed data from PNDR 2014 - 2020;

On the opposite side there are measures M09 - establishment of groups and producer organizations in agriculture and forestry, namely M16 – cooperation, with allocations below 30 million euros over the six years of the program so that these allocations totaling 8 billion euros for the National Rural Development Program, plus the contribution from the state budget, amounting to 1.5 billion euros, so that Romania has available, in 2014-2020 the total amount of 9.5 billion euro money supporting rural destinations and business developed in rural areas.

In chart no. 1 we can see that the amounts allocated for the programming period 2014-2020 are distributed in a decreasing way since 2015 when the fund amounts to over 1.7 billion euros, followed in 2020, it at just 1.1 billion euros, but we can say, from the previous schedule from 2007 to 2013, we learned that this period will most likely extend for another two years because as we know and PNDR 2007-2013 was available to farmers by 2015, whereas the chances of a full absorption in this period are extremely small.

The role of Measure 19 - support for local development of LEADER is very important for the National Rural Development in socio-economic development of rural areas, to reduce disparities between urban and rural areas and promote social inclusion.

By 2011, the number of LAGs (81) accounted for around 63% of the eligible territory and 58% of the eligible LEADER population, so that in the new programming period intends to complement entirely to these two issues and expects the number of LAGs fixes may reach over 200 and covering almost 90% of the eligible area.

Environmental issues and climate change, one of the major problems of humanity are encouraged by this measure, which supports efficient water use, diversification of agriculture and the establishment of agricultural activities in regard to the identification and use of renewable energies play a role particularly in rural development.

The existing problems in these areas can be solved by finding innovative solutions supporting public utility projects with economic, social, cultural and natural impact.

The four sub-measures constituting the LEADER measures are designed to complement each other so that the first sub 19.1 - Support preparatory, offering support for the establishment of Local Action Groups, the second one sub-measure provides support for the implementation of operations under local development strategies, and the last two sub-measures relates to the support provided for the preparation and implementation of cooperation activities of the Local Action Groups, namely the costs of running and animating their activities.

The four sub-measures forming the Leader measure, we can say that there is also completing mutual relationship aimed at rural development. We can say that by its sub-measure

19.3 - Preparation and implementation of cooperation activities of the Local Action Group is an opportunity for LAGs in Romania to access to the experiences of the LAGs from other countries that have this system well established and to interact with the European community of Leader.

Under this preparatory stage, it involves six parts that these actors have go through, following the simplified diagram below, and this is the most important stage as it represents the startup stage in the establishment of a Local Action Group.

Fig. 1.

The process of granting preparatory support



Source: Leader measure sheet, V3 draft

At first glance we can say that the process is relatively easy, after developing a scheme so that in the first stage, the Paying Agency launches call for the selection of cases, followed by those interested in submitting specific documentation. In the third stage the Payments Agency carries out the examinations of submitted dossiers of preliminary font, then these are selected by AM. The last two phases will sign the contract between the beneficiary and the Paying Agency and check the implementation projects by it.

The selection of projects under the Local Action Groups is transparent based on a flow of these steps, stating in an efficient step taken by these in order to select projects that will receive funding for the investments covered so that once the Group of Local Action launches call for project selection, using the most efficient ways of informing potential beneficiaries can submit their secretariat draft.

LAG out checks for compliance project and compliance with eligibility criteria. Selecting files is based on the LAG strategy, based on its criteria. Besides the LAG selected projects end up being verified by the Paying Agency which will send back a notification regarding the approval or disapproval of the project.

The final recipient of the payment applies to LAG, and they submit Paying Agency after checking in advance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Romania has benefited in the past from European funds under this LEADER measure, the results achieved are low in practical terms, even though much of these funds have been absorbed. With the establishment of new LAGs covering the whole eligible area of the country, this can make a contribution that will be felt in terms of the harmonious development of rural areas.

Given that the rural town halls receive insufficient funds to conduct complex works, but a necessity unquestionable lives of people, the amounts allocated to this measure through the LAG represents a milestone in this aspect.

It is absolutely necessary that the promotion campaign among all rural actors to be more aware of this opportunity which aims, whether we are talking about town halls that can attract such investments to upgrade the infrastructure of the village they represent, whether merely a farmer who

wants to streamline activities at the farm, so that through Local Action Groups shortens practical approval process of any type of project aimed at an investment covered by a specific measure in the National Program Rural Development.

It is noticeable that the LEADER measure, inexperienced with managing European funds and said the word so that by 2012 the absorption of European funds dedicated to this measure were rather weak, whereas the level of this year the number of LAGs founded only reaches 83, with coverage of only 63% of the eligible population. However after 2012, with the massive promotion made this measure things began to take shape and the number of LAGs reached the level of 2015 to 163, an increase of 50% compared to 2012.

The new programming period 2014-2020, with a significant allocation for LEADER measure, proposes the establishment of more than 200 LAGs with over 90% coverage of the eligible area under this measure.

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