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The influence of European funds in visible development of rural areas: Case study, place, Ciugud, Alba county

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THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN FUNDS IN VISIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS - CASE STUDY, PLACE. CIUGUD, ALBA COUNTY

DUMITRU EDUARD ALEXANDRU¹

Abstract: *The situation in which the Romanian rural village presents itself is not at all happy, identifying a whole series of problems that may contribute to the worst phenomenon, namely the depopulation of the rural area, characterized by the migration of young people to the big urban centers and the birth rate to an extremely low level. This country-wide phenomenon, but with a more marked manifestation in rural areas, seems to be driven by poor living conditions, lack of jobs, including life perspectives, which make young people leave regions.*

Those who are involved in the development of these localities are almost non-existent, most often determined by the lack of funds necessary for the investments that could develop the locality or the region, which would then attract investors, thus creating jobs, which could facilitate leaving young people in rural areas.

With the involvement of local authorities by attracting European non-reimbursable funds, the conditions for a harmonious development of these settlements could be created, in which their youth would be the engine of their development.

Keywords: *The Romanian village, the young people from rural areas, the rural environment*

Classification JEL: *Q19*

INTRODUCTION

As defined in the Lisbon Agenda, rural space is defined as "one of the fundamental and defining values for Europe that must be preserved, cared for and promoted." Since then, since 1998, the European Union has focused on protecting such areas, so as to avoid the danger of their disappearance. One of the main arguments for the protection of rural space is represented by the fact that it represents the origins of the current society in which we live, and its eventual disappearance would amount to loss of identity as a country but also as a people.

The word "rural" comes from the Latin *ruris*, *ruris* referring to culture, fields, occupied territory, inhabited, arranged or worked by man. Rural includes all non-urban activities and comprises three essential parts, namely: administrative communities, strong population dispersion and collective services, and the special economic role of agriculture and forestry.²

In Romania, there are several localities that make a discordant note of the Romanian village, which is characterized by the fact that the population in the locality has an ascending trend due to the young people remaining in these localities. In this situation is also the village of Ciugud, 10 km from the city of Alba Iulia, and consists of six villages: Ciugud (residence), Drâmbar, Hăpia, Limba, Șeușa and Teleac.

Ciugud is the only commune in Alba County where the population is steadily growing. From 2,664 inhabitants, according to statistical data from the 2011 census, the population of the commune reached 3048 inhabitants, of which 96.49% are Romanian, indicating that 2.79% said ethnicity. From a confessional point of view, 86.84% are Orthodox, 4.48% Christians after the Gospel, 3.25% Baptists (3.25), and 2.13% Pentecostal. For 2.95% of the population, confessional membership is unknown.³

The main role in the development of rural areas lies with the local public authorities, which contribute to the economic agents in the area as well as to the population, who also play an essential role in the development of these areas.

Of the total area of the country, about 87.1% represents the rural space, made up of communes, as administrative-territorial units, and the component villages, inhabiting almost half of Romania's population. In rural areas, agriculture dominates the net as an economic activity, occupying about 70% of the workforce, while the non-agricultural sector is reduced especially to small

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² Bold, I., Buciuman, E., Drăghici, N., Spațiul rural – definire, organizare, dezvoltare. Editura Mirton, Timișoara, 2003;

³ Information provided by Ciugud Commune City Hall;

commercial or production units as well as to the activities of local authorities or the subordinated institutions their.⁴

MATERIALS AND METHODS

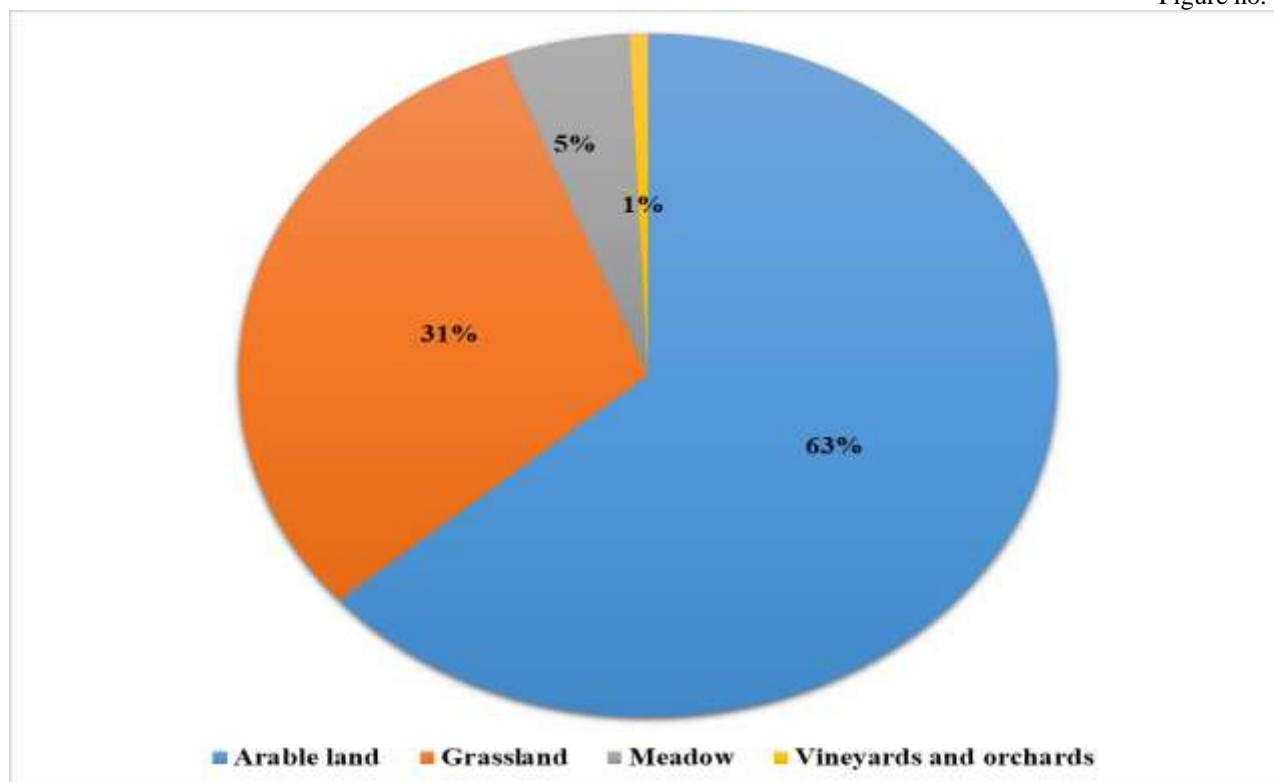
The research is based on information obtained from the processing of the data distributed by the National Institute of Statistics, but especially from the data obtained from the Ciugud commune in Alba County.

The information obtained will determine the evolution of the population in the commune, the economic situation of the locality, the social situation of the inhabitants of the commune.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ciugud Commune in Alba County, comprising six villages: Ciugud (residence), Drâmbar, Hăpia, Limba, Șșeșa and Teleac, has an administrative area of 4376,98 hectares, of which the agricultural land is 3182 hectares.

Figure no. 1.



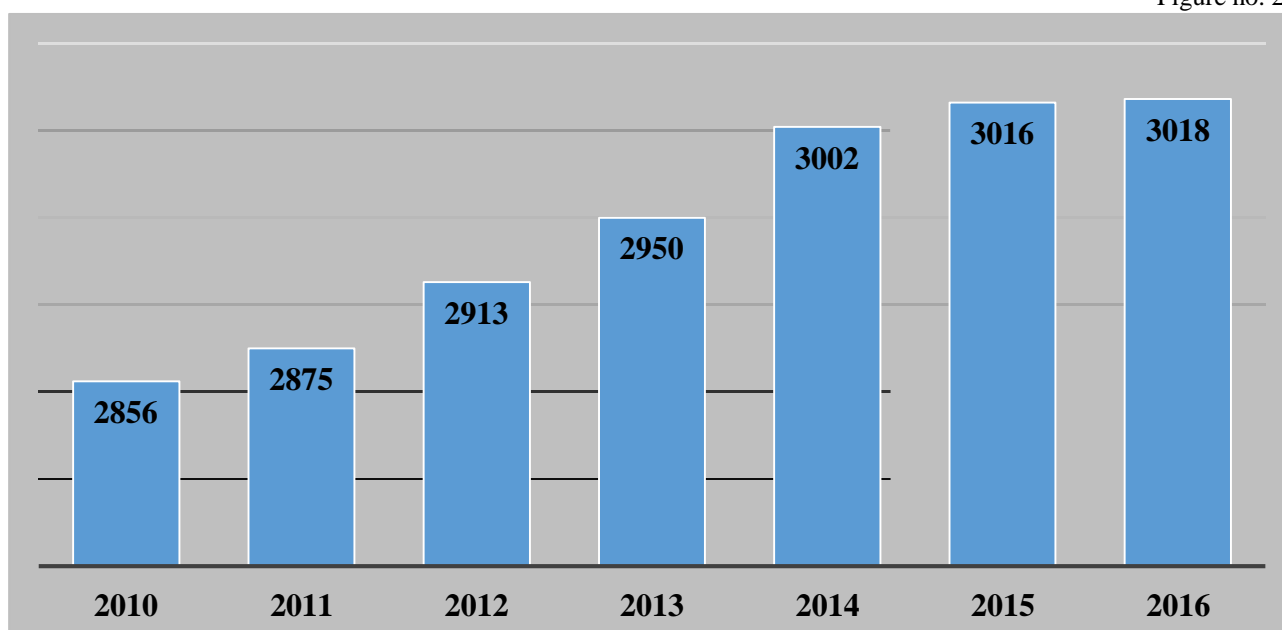
Source: processed data Ciugud Commune, Alba County;

Distribution of agricultural land according to the mode of use

Of the 3182 hectares of agricultural land, about 63% of it is arable land (2023 hectares), 31% is a pasture (977 hectares), and at the opposite is the meadows and vineyards and orchards with 5% (15 hectares) and 1% (23 hectares) respectively (Figure 1).

⁴ Unity and diversity in the Romanian village, Thematic publication no. 24, and II;

Figure no. 2.

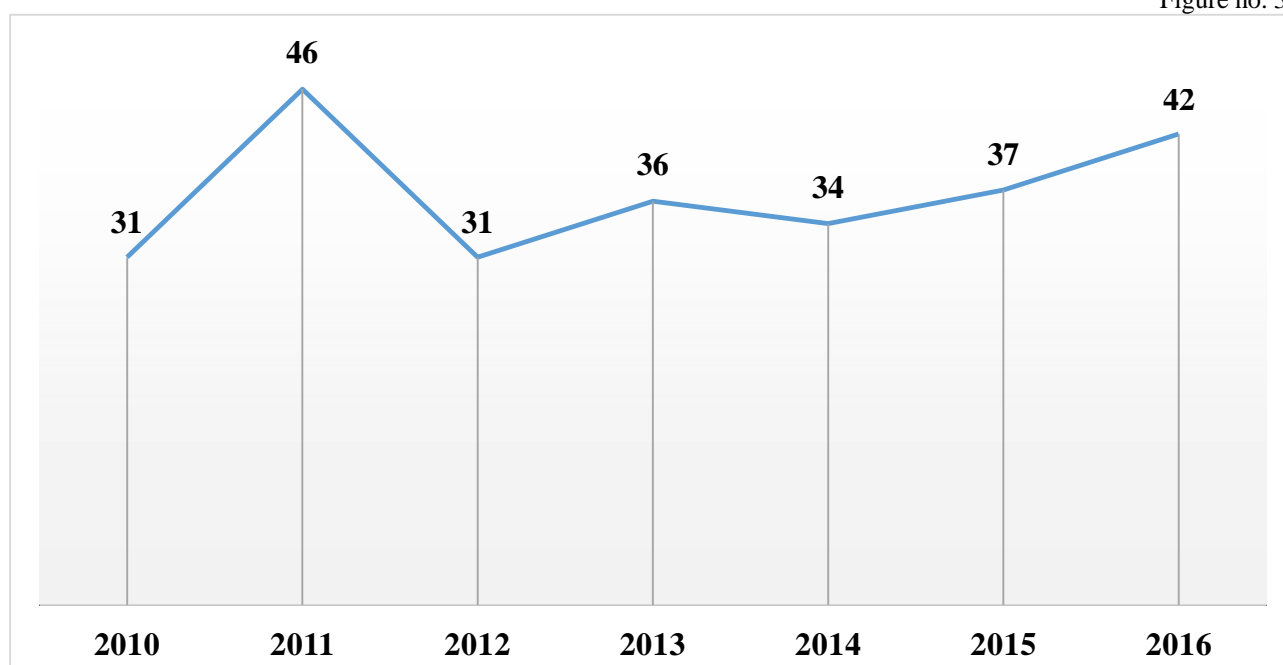


Source: processed data Ciugud Commune, Alba County;

Evolution of the number of inhabitants in Ciugud commune during 2010 - 2016

Regarding the evolution of Ciugud inhabitants, there is an ascending trend during the analyzed period of 2010, until 2016, so that if in 2010 the population of the locality was 2856 inhabitants, at the end of 2016 the population was situated around 3018 inhabitants. The most pronounced increase occurred between 2013 and 2014 when the population of the locality increased by over 1.7% (52 inhabitants) compared to 2013 (Figure 2).

Figure no. 3.

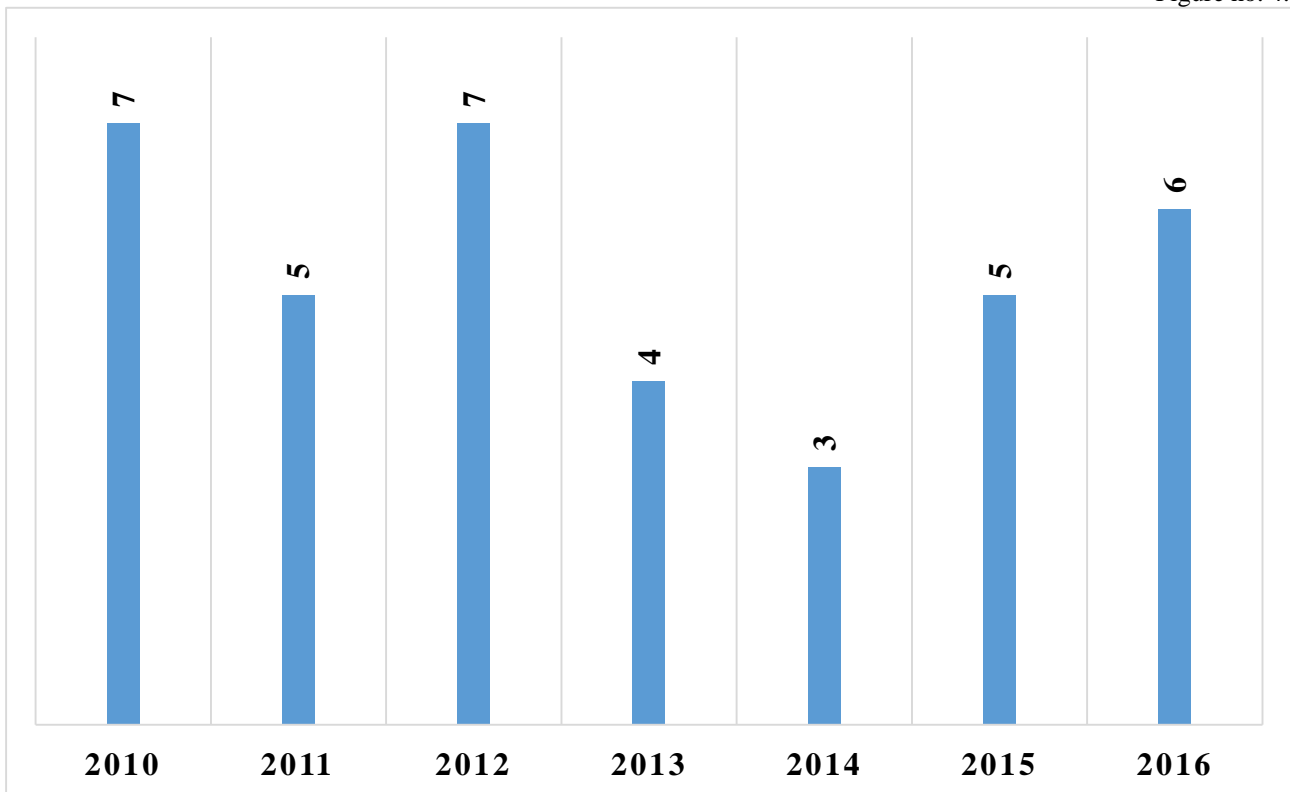


Source: processed data Ciugud Commune, Alba County;

Evolution of the number of deceased persons registered in Ciugud commune during 2010 - 2016

Evolution of the number of deceased persons shows an oscillating trend, with variations between 31 (reached in 2010 and 2012) and 46 registered in 2011, thus averaging 37 deaths per year in the Ciugud town of Alba County during the period 2010 - 2016 (Figure 3).

Figure no. 4.

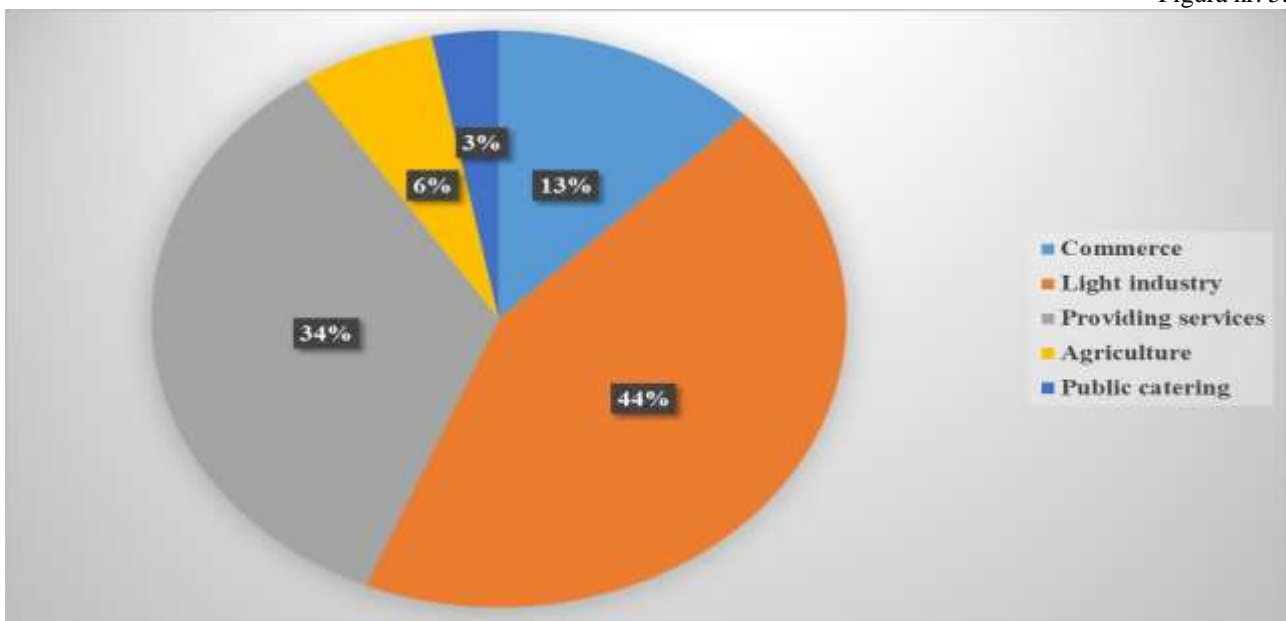


Source: processed data Ciugud Commune, Alba County;

Evolution of the number of social assistants registered in Ciugud commune, between 2010 and 2016

As regards the number of social assistants, it is extremely low compared to other localities in Romania. If in Ciugud County in Arad County the average number of social assisted persons in the period 2010-2016 is about 5 assisted in 3018 inhabitants, for example in Grindu in Ialomita County, the average number of them in the period 2010-2016 is about 52 assisted in a population of 2047 (in 2016), which means a number of social assistants 10 times higher (Figure 4).⁵

Figura nr. 5.



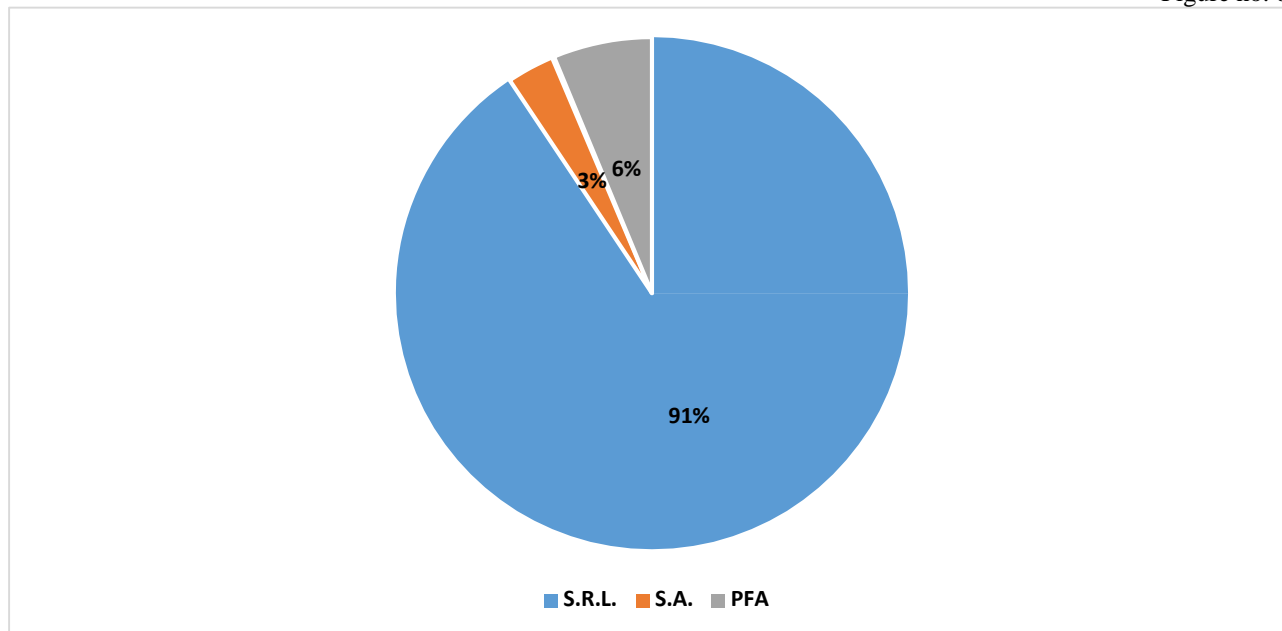
Source: processed data Ciugud Commune, Alba County;

Distribution of economic agents by field of activity

⁵ Analysis of the situation of Romanian Village - case study Grindu commune, Ialomita County;

From the economic point of view of Ciugud, this seems to be a diversified one in which the activities in the light industry predominate, accounting for 44% of the total number of economic agents, followed by 34% of the services. At the opposite end, there are business activities (13%), agriculture (6%) and catering (3%). It should be noted that, unlike the localities in southern Romania, which predominantly focus on agriculture and trade, in this case they are oriented towards light industry (Figure 5).

Figure no. 6.



Source: processed data Ciugud Commune, Alba County;

Distribution of economic agents by legal form

Analyzing the distribution of economic agents according to the legal form they have chosen, it is found that the most common legal form is that of S.R.L. in proportion of 91% of the total companies in the locality (Limited Liability Company), followed by P.F.A. with 6% (Authorized Individuals), and by S.A. of only 3% (Joint Stock Companies). It should be noted that there are no economic agents in the legal form of family enterprises which, by not offering serious advantages to other legal forms, do not encourage the choice of this kind of legal form through which the activities that would engage all family members in a business (Figure 6).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The upward trend observed in the evolution of the population of Ciugud in the period 2010-2016 can be attributed to the emergence of jobs especially in different sectors such as agriculture, such as those in the light industry, which manage to provide over 700 places Work of the inhabitants of Ciugud commune, materialized in an industrial park in which more than 20 investors came. Ciugud is also known to be the highest-absorbed European fund, worth more than 16 million euros.⁶

Through its national funding programs, Ciugud has implemented a series of projects aimed at rehabilitating a 400,000-euro gymnasium, introducing the sewerage network in the commune's industrial area (400,000 euros), and renovating 4 homes worth around 900,000 euros.

Also, in order to keep the population in the locality or to attract from other areas, an important role is also the creation of appropriate living conditions, so that through a project financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD measure 322 of the NRDP 2007-

⁶ processed data Ciugud Commune, Alba County;

2013), over 7 million euro were accessed, with 42 km of sewerage for 9 villages, served by 2 modern treatment plants. The same project introduced the water supply network in 3 villages on a length of 40 km and 8 km of public streets were asphalted.

By measure 125 of the NRDP 2007-2013, over 2 million Euros have been accessed through which 26 km of agricultural road has been arranged and paved, contributing to an increase of the agricultural activity by 80%, and arable land has grown almost entirely.

The traditions play an extremely important role in the cultural development of the localities, and in this sense investments have been made in modernizing and endowing the Ethnographic Exhibition of Ciugud commune.

In order to facilitate the payment of citizens' fees and contributions to the local budget, a system has been created which, by simply accessing and authenticating on the municipality's website, can pay for the state.

Also, the investments continued in the infrastructure of the locality, namely in the village of Șeșea where the first wind power station in the county was built, which provides the necessary current for public lighting of the locality (through the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Government of Norway), but also in recreation and playing for children on a 1 hectare area.

Practically, investments made in the locality could attract investors, whether foreign or Romanian, which generated jobs for the local population, creating optimal facilities for young people to set up a family. This can be noticed especially by the ascendant trend registered by the number of inhabitants in Ciugud commune in Alba County.

The great majority of the problems encountered and complained by the local public authorities refer to the bureaucracy and the lack of co-financing of the projects through the European funds, but once these obstacles have been overcome, the revitalization of the localities in the rural area is almost guaranteed, and this has to be correlated with a good vision in terms of future investments.

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