

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SNAGOV, ILFOV COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract

A local development strategy allows the active coordination of the development process taking place in the territory, taking into account local characteristics, changes in the external environment and allowing a positive approach to territorial development in an innovative way. Local development strategies are characterized by at least seven characteristics recommended to local managers responsible for development: vision for the future, creativity, flexibility, activity, created for action, orientation to change and orientation to sustainable gain. The purpose of this paper is to highlight both the needs and requirements of the inhabitants of the Snagov commune, respectively the degree of satisfaction with the public services they benefit from, as well as the development vision of the Snagov commune. To obtain the information necessary for the study, the questionnaire method was used, and the group of people related to the sample filled in the requested data and expressed their opinions regarding public services, infrastructure, community projects. The key challenge is to ensure a balanced and sustainable development of the territory based on polycentric development, providing services to the surrounding rural areas, avoiding the decline of the rural population and ensuring the continued attractiveness of these areas.

Key words: Snagov Commune, development, administration, economy

INTRODUCTION

Snagov commune is located in the north of Ilfov county, about 40 km from Bucharest, Romania's capital, and almost the same distance from Ploiești City, Prahova County. On its territory, we find extensive areas of forests (remains of the Codris of Vlăsia), lake areas and agricultural lands.

Snagov commune (constituted in 1968 in its current form) is composed of the following villages: Cioflăceni; Ghermănești; Snagov (Dobroșești until 1938); Tâncăbești; Vlădiceasca. In 1988, the village of Vlădiceasca and part of the village of Cioflăceni were demolished. They were completely rebuilt after 1990. The villages of Cioflăceni, Ghermănești, Snagov and Vlădiceasca are located on the southern shore of Lake Snagov, and the village of Tâncăbești is located on the northern shore of the lake.

According to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, the population

of Snagov commune on January 1, 2023, was 8,064 inhabitants.



Map. 1. Administrative Map of Snagov Commune
Source: Snagov Town Hall [14].

The share of the number of inhabitants in the villages, at the beginning of 2023, was as follows: Snagov - 2,122, Ghermănești - 2,962, Cioflăceni - 1,224, Vlădiceasca - 244, Tâncăbești - 1,512 (Figure 1). From the given situation it follows that the village of

Ghermănești has the largest number of inhabitants.

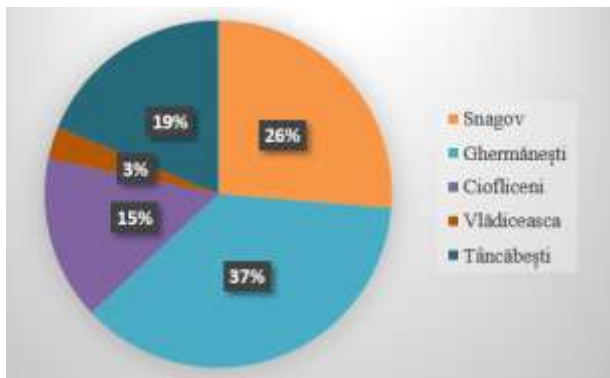


Fig. 1. The share of the population in the composition of villages
Source: NIS [10].

The local economy is supported by private commercial or production companies. In the commune's economy, tourism is a predominant activity, followed by agriculture, represented by the private property of individual peasant households or agricultural associations.

According to the data from the National Office of the Trade Register next to the Ilfov Court, in the Snagov commune, 803 economic agents have their headquarters.

An important place in the economy of the commune of Snagov is occupied by commercial companies from different economic sectors such as transport of people, transport of goods, industrial constructions, tourism (through the tourist reception structures in the commune), public catering and trade, car maintenance, etc.

The agricultural area of Snagov commune is 4,089 hectares, being used in general for the cultivation of cereals, plants producing oilseeds and fodder plants.

In Snagov commune, agriculture is generally focused on the cultivation of cereals - wheat, barley, corn, plants producing oilseeds - sunflower and rapeseed, and peas are cultivated from the leguminous category. Regarding the animal husbandry sector, there are small family pig, cattle and poultry farms in the locality.

The agricultural specificity of the commune offers tourists, first of all, the opportunity to get to know some cultural traditions of the commune of Snagov, to spend their vacation

in an authentic rural environment, where they seek peace, fresh air and want to practice hiking, sports or other activities.

Tourist attractions such as churches and monasteries, forests, lakes and the hospitality of the villagers involve various social and age categories and provide the opportunity to visit historical monuments, museums or to participate in traditional celebrations or customs, practices related to the agricultural calendar or social events in the life of the community, contemplation nature. Among the elements of the local tourist heritage, we can mention the Lake Snagov Nature Reserve, the Snagov Forest, the Snagov Monastery (Vlad Țepeș), and the Snagov Palace [13].

In this context, the purpose of the paper is to highlight the needs and requirements of the residents of the Snagov commune, as well as the degree of satisfaction with the public services they benefit from.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Rigorously carried out sociological investigations can bring to light important aspects of social reality, allowing decision-makers and institutions to adopt suitable ameliorative strategies for the identified problems.

The present study is destined to a social survey interested in getting information and making an analysis about what needs and requirements have the residents of the Snagov commune regarding the public services and also their satisfaction degree [2].

In order to obtain the information necessary for the study, it was used a field survey based on the questionnaire method. This is a method or technique often used in descriptive research. Through the questionnaire, the selected group of people (called the sample) filled in the requested data and expressed their opinions regarding public services, infrastructure, and community projects [8], [9].

The questionnaire is a technique and at the same time an investigative tool that consists of a set of written questions, logically and psychologically ordered, which, through the

administration of the investigation operators, determine answers from the investigated to be recorded in writing [2].

In the case of our research, the indirect survey through the questionnaire was used, considering the advantages of this opinion polling tool, namely the opportunity offered to the subjects to think enough before answering, the elimination of the disturbing influence of the survey operator, the elimination of mistakes recording and interpretation of data etc.

In creating the questionnaire, we had in mind the creation of factual questions, as well as opinion questions that usually probe the inner universe of the individual, more precisely the opinions of individuals and the subjective evaluations regarding the studied topic.

We built closed questions, starting from the premise that they ensure greater rigour and solid validity of the research instrument, but also open questions with short answers. In formulating the closed questions, the criterion of completeness was taken into account, i.e. the possibility offered to each respondent to find a satisfactory answer for himself, from those proposed, the necessity of classifying the answer variants into distinct categories and the possibility of providing univocal answers [12].

The formulated questions are: introductory, passing and with a moderate degree of abstraction. In making them up, I tried not to make them too demanding or boring. Through the form and content of the formulated questions, through the language used, we wanted these investigative tools to be easy to understand and complete.

When checking the questionnaires, I mainly looked at three aspects: their completeness, accuracy and uniformity. Completeness refers to the fact that each question must receive an answer, and in the case of non-answers, their cause must be analyzed. In the case of the present research, we only faced this problem to a small extent, considering the fact that some of the questions were closed [12].

As a rule, closed questions make completing and analyzing the questionnaire easier. But, open questions have the advantage that they make available to those who propose to

research a certain phenomenon, a multitude of alternative answers that give an overview of the studied phenomenon.

The received responses from the questioned interviewees have been statistically processed and the results were interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The sociological survey was conducted on a sample of 812 respondents, which represents approximately 10% of the population of Snagov commune. The residents of the commune of Snagov, who participated in the investigation, highlighted the most important problems of the commune.

During the investigation, the citizens were questioned about their level of satisfaction with some aspects of the commune. Regarding the road infrastructure in Snagov commune, a percentage of 63% declared themselves satisfied and very satisfied. Residents expressed their dissatisfaction with a percentage of 37% (Fig. 2).

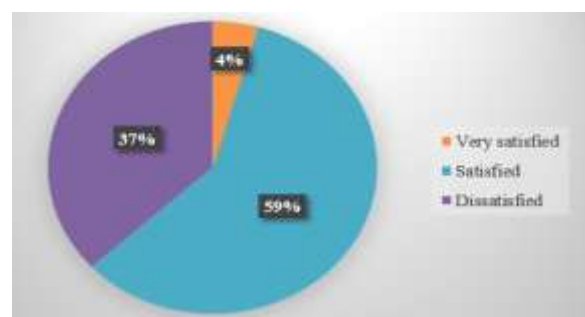


Fig. 2. The public opinion regarding the road infrastructure in Snagov commune
Source: own contribution.

The respondents were also asked to appreciate the aspects related to the state of the utilities in Snagov commune. The inhabitants of the commune expressed their dissatisfaction with the state of the utilities, in a percentage of 60%, while 40% of the respondents are satisfied and very satisfied (Fig. 3).

The technical condition and degree of coverage of the natural gas network, as well as the technical condition and degree of coverage of the electricity and street lighting network, are satisfactory for all the citizens of the commune.

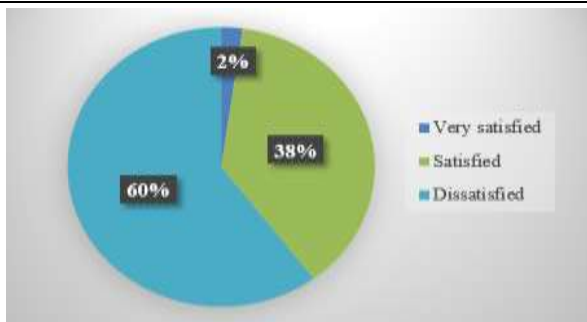


Fig. 3. The public opinion regarding the state of utilities in Snagov commune
 Source: own contribution.

Citizens' dissatisfaction concerning the state of utilities comes from the low level of coverage of the sewage network, as well as because of the state of the water supply network.

Questioned about the provision of medical services in the Snagov commune, 53% of the respondents declared that they were satisfied and very satisfied, while 47% of the respondents claimed that they were dissatisfied with the level of provision of medical services at the level of the commune (Fig. 4).

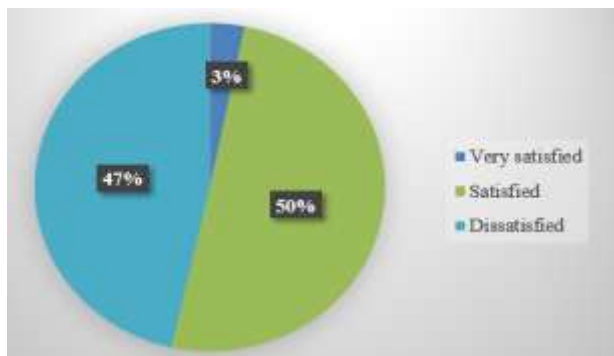


Fig. 4. The public opinion regarding the adequacy of medical services in Snagov commune
 Source: own contribution.

In the survey, respondents were asked to express their level of satisfaction with the educational services provided in Snagov commune. To this question, 52% of respondents claim that they are satisfied and very satisfied with the degree of provision of educational services in Snagov commune, while 48% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the degree of provision of educational services (Fig. 5).

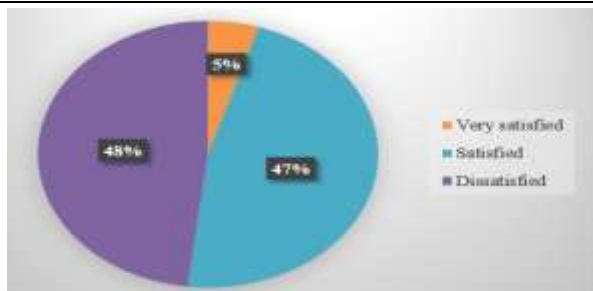


Fig. 5. The public opinion regarding the adequacy of education services in Snagov commune
 Source: own contribution.

When asked about the degree of provision of public transport services in Snagov commune, a percentage of 69% of respondents showed that they were satisfied and very satisfied, while 31% of respondents declared themselves dissatisfied with the degree of provision of transport services (Fig. 6).

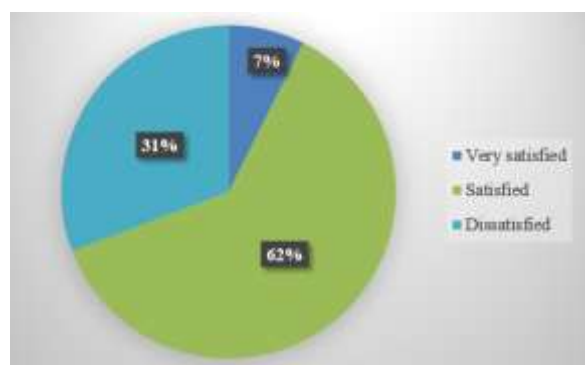


Fig. 6. The public opinion regarding on the adequacy of public transportation services in Snagov commune
 Source: own contribution.

Asked about the opportunities offered by the commune of Snagov, from an economic point of view, 72% of the respondents are dissatisfied since the chances of finding a job in the commune are very small.

Also, in terms of attracting young people to the Snagov commune, 80% of the respondents claim that the Snagov locality is not of interest to young people.

Asked about the most important fields that they believe should be encouraged in Snagov commune, the respondents stated that the main field on which attention should be focused is tourism, this being expressed by 72% of the respondents (Fig. 7).

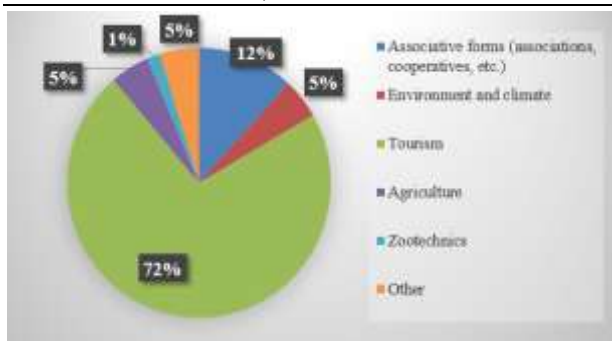


Fig. 7. The public opinion regarding the economic activities that should be encouraged in Snagov commune

Source: own contribution.

A percentage of 12% believe that associative forms (associations, cooperatives) should be encouraged, 5% believe that activities related to the environment and climate require attention, 5% support that agricultural

activities should be encouraged, while 1% support activities in the sector of animal husbandry (Fig.7).

When asked about the projects that should be solved urgently in the Snagov commune, 24% of respondents claim that the most important project for the community is the connection of households to utilities, followed by the repair/equipment of educational institutions, this being desired by 23 % of respondents. A percentage of 16% of the people who answered the questionnaire claim that attracting entrepreneurs is important for the commune of Snagov, and 10% of respondents claim that attracting tourists is important for the commune. The other proposed options did not show a great interest among the respondents (Fig. 8).

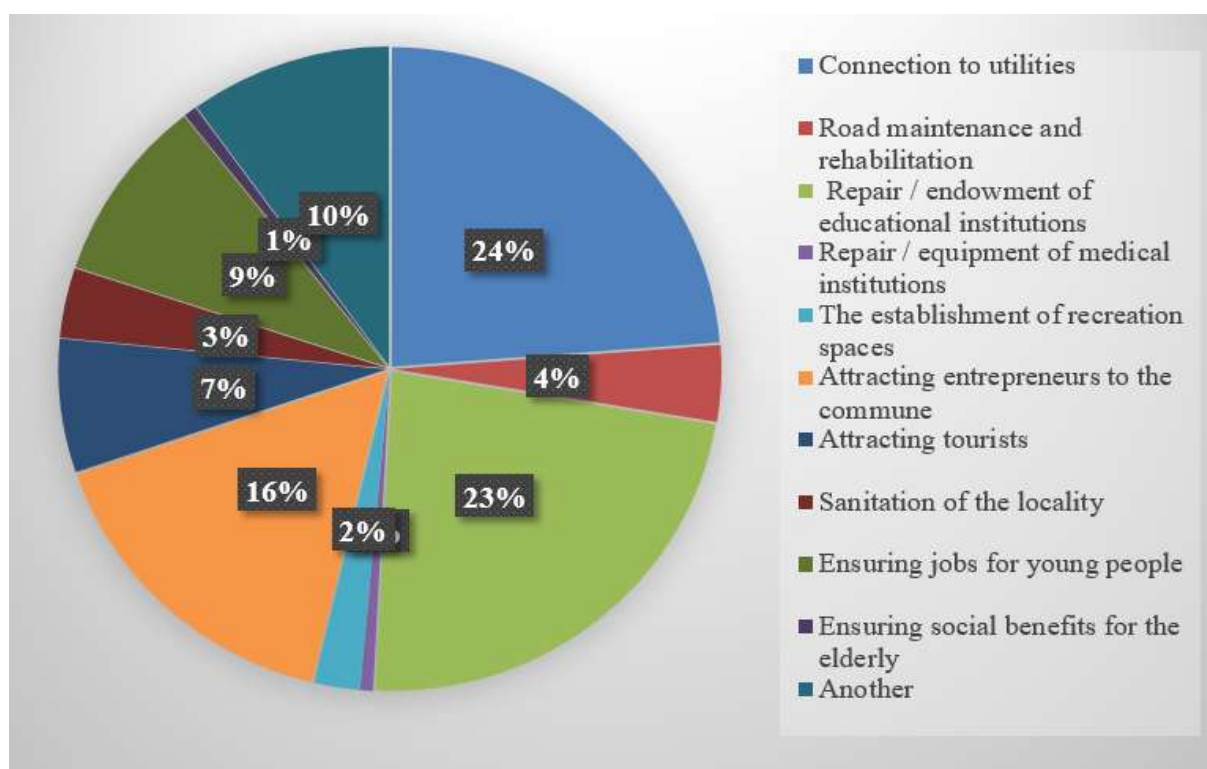


Fig. 8. The residents' opinion on the projects that should be urgently addressed
 Source: own contribution.

Regarding the development of the Snagov commune, the respondents were asked to specify a project that would have a positive impact on the citizens. They largely proposed projects for the development of tourism in the locality, the reconstruction of the "Mihail Kogălniceanu" High School, the rehabilitation of schools and the construction of

kindergartens with extended hours, the development of utility networks, greening measures, the development of medical infrastructure and the attraction of entrepreneurs to diversify the job market in the commune. To this question, a percentage of 28% of the respondents proposed tourism development

projects in the locality. Among the projects proposed by the citizens, there can be mentioned: the development of promenade spaces on the shore of Lake Snagov, circuits with steamboats on Lake Snagov, tourist routes for cyclists through the Snagov Forest, the rehabilitation of the railway that runs through the Snagov Forest and the creation of tourist circuits by train, the development of parks and recreation spaces.

A percentage of 26% of the respondents proposed projects for the development of the educational infrastructure in Snagov commune. Among them, 21% want the reconstruction of the "Mihail Kogălniceanu" High School, which entered into a rehabilitation process at the beginning of 2015 and was left in disrepair due to project management-related problems. The other 5% propose the modernization of the educational institutions in the commune and the construction of kindergartens with an extended program and nurseries.

Among the respondents to this question, 25% support the utility network development projects in the Snagov commune. The main dissatisfaction of the inhabitants comes from the poor functioning of the drinking water network, and the non-existence of the sewage network in the villages of Cioflăceni, Vlădiceasca and Tâncăbești.

A percentage of 8% of the respondents proposed projects to green the area. Among these, we can highlight the selective collection of waste, the sanitation of the forest and the Snagov Lake, and the tightening of sanctions for residents who deposit household waste in the surroundings of these two ecosystems.

Another percentage of 8% of the respondents support the projects related to attracting entrepreneurs and investors to the Snagov commune, to diversify the labour market at the local level. Along with attracting entrepreneurs, citizens can benefit from stable jobs in the commune, and the degree of attraction of young people would be higher.

Analyzing the results of the questionnaire, we notice that a percentage of 5% of the respondents support projects to modernize the medical units in the commune and propose the establishment of a medical clinic to benefit

from specialized medical consultations in several fields, medical tests and other medical operations near the home which currently cannot be achieved together.

The local development strategy of the commune of Snagov is an approach that considers the mutations that have appeared permanently in the local horizon and at the level of the regional area in which it falls, spatially and functionally, at the national and European level. The strategy proposes a balanced, integrated approach, which is based both on increasing the quality of life in a stimulating, prosperous and balanced framework for all residents, as well as on increasing the economic competitiveness of the locality by referring to the relationship with the Municipality of Bucharest [5], [7].

The development vision of the Snagov commune is based on the principles and guidelines promoted by the European Union within its policies and strategies, in the context of the globalization of the knowledge-based economy and society (Fig. 9). The vision is based on the main distinctive competencies of the locality and aims to capitalize on them to ensure sustainable development of the commune by attracting entrepreneurs to develop new economic activities based on innovation, promoting quality public services and improving mobility [3], [4].



Fig. 9. The pillars of development for Snagov commune

Source: own contribution.

With the aim of fulfilling the vision of local development, the local administration of Snagov commune will focus on achieving the following strategic objectives:

OS1. Snagov commune - competitiveness through entrepreneurship and innovation

The local economy, being based to a large extent on trade activities, must be encouraged in development directions whose integrated effect brings well-being, mainly to the inhabitants. In order to increase the competitiveness of the local economy in the long term, it is necessary to build a strong economy by maximizing the workforce and local potential [1].

This particular objective has been categorized into three main priorities:

1.1. Attracting investors and capital so as to develop the business environment

The current priority aims to define the profile of the Snagov town as an investment point, as well as to identify the instruments for attracting investors from the key sectors of the economy. Also, this priority aims to attract well-trained human resources to support the local economy.

1.2. Creating an attractive, competitive and innovative socio-economic environment

This priority aims to support the local environment by organizing events and communication platforms that support the establishment of partnerships, promoting products related to the cultural identity of the locality, as well as the creation of support infrastructure for entrepreneurs in creative industries.

1.3. Supporting the development of human resources

This priority is a result of the intensification of competition at the national and international levels regarding the efficient administration of human resources. Investments are needed in the development of human resources so as to improve the training and professional development system that can quickly adapt to the dynamics of the labour market.

OS2. Snagov commune - cultural identity

Cultural heritage represents a grouping of resources inherited from their ancestors, which people identify and consider as a

reflection and expression of their values, knowledge, beliefs and traditions. Cultural heritage includes all aspects of the environment, as a result of the interaction between people and places over time.

The history of each locality is unique and represents an irreplaceable quality that makes a vital contribution to the quality of life of each resident. Historic areas define local history, generate income from tourism activities and add distinctive local character to our sense of place and belonging [7].

The proposed objective comprises of two distinct priorities that have been structured accordingly:

2.1. Tourism capitalized and promoted through attractive activities and high-quality services in Snagov commune

Tourism represents a branch of the national economy, with complex functions, which brings together a set of goods and services offered for consumption to people who travel outside their usual environment for less than one year and whose main reason is other than exercising an activity remunerated within the visited place. The commune of Snagov has a remarkable tourist potential, linked to its location on the site of the Vlășia woods and surrounded by the remaining forests, as well as the presence of the Snagov Lake and the Orthodox monasteries together with their museums. A special attraction is the possibility of practising fishing, water sports, hunting and access to cultural heritage values [15].

2.2. Integration and valorization of heritage objectives in the local circuit through public spaces and representative leisure areas

Within the commune of Snagov, the existence of heritage buildings of particular value can be noted, represented by the Monastic Ensemble on the island of the Snagov monastery, the Constantin Băicoianu School in the village of Tâncăbești, as well as the churches of the commune that have a special architecture. The preservation and valorization of cultural resources, represented by immovable heritage (archaeological and architectural ensembles, monuments, sites), movable heritage (archives, museums, collections), intangible heritage (traditions,

crafts, customs) and cultural landscapes, constitute an important strategic direction of development at the level of the Snagov commune, but also of the Ilfov county, emphasizing the importance of using the cultural heritage in a sustainable and balanced way.

OS3. Snagov Commune – Planned territorial development and sustainable mobility

Mobility has a significant impact on the functioning of cities. For example, citizens tend to use personal cars as their primary means of transportation, leading to high motorization rates and traffic jams. Motorized traffic is associated with significant emissions of noise and other pollutants, including greenhouse gases, and high costs associated with time, fuel and deterioration of public health. To minimize the external effects of transport system performance, the influence of motorized vehicles in urban mobility should be reduced [11].

The previously stated aim is organized into three primary areas of focus:

3.1. Transport infrastructure adapted for non-motorised or low-CO2 journeys

An alternative, coherent and well-structured transport system is essential for the economic and social viability of the county. These considerations, as well as a reasonable structure and a well-designed network of bicycle paths and sidewalks, can promote the choice of transport methods that are not conducive to the use of personal cars, thereby reducing emissions of toxic and greenhouse gases, and thus have a positive impact on the quality of the environment, and associated with other forms of transport, can improve the mobility of residents, road traffic safety and the safety of cyclists and pedestrians.

Like most localities in Romania, the commune of Snagov has not yet fully adapted to the new urban traffic trends, which prioritize trips with vehicles without a motor or with low CO₂ emissions.

Therefore, the specific objective dedicated to travel with vehicles without a motor or with low CO₂ emissions includes projects designed to encourage walking and cycling.

3.2. Efficient and attractive public transport system that provides balanced services for the residents and business environment of Snagov municipality

In contemporary society, public transport services must be analyzed from all aspects of daily life and the normal flow of the population, because the flow of the population is not limited to the family-service-housing relationship and is closely related to society, economy and culture. To deal with these difficulties, the objective is mainly to develop a public transport system according to the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan of the Bucharest - Ilfov Region, as well as to modernize the stations and increase the frequency of public transport for passengers [11].

3.3. Planned territorial development

Planned territorial development supports local economic development and is one of the main pillars underlying a sustainable economy. Transport planning and land use must be studied comprehensively along with their interaction. The impact determined by the interaction between the two factors may be different from the impact expected by treating the two subjects separately. The results obtained depend on the size, density and structure of the territory, as well as on the characteristics of the transport system. Land use regulation, in terms of its potential to affect average journey times, can also be seen as a factor in determining the level of energy consumption in a region [11].

OS4. Snagov Commune – High-performance and high-quality public services

The structure of this objective revolves around four main priorities:

4.1. Diverse and effective social assistance services to meet the needs of all types of persons

Local policies in the field of social assistance aim to adopt a series of measures for the effective management of the fight against social exclusion and the promotion of social inclusion in building a coherent system, aimed at the permanent improvement of various measures of financial support for families, children and persons in the categories of risk,

as well as strengthening and developing the network of social services.

The purpose of this priority is to promote social inclusion by diversifying social facilities and services and through programs that integrate people with difficulties in the labour market and society

4.2. Invest in education, skills and lifelong learning

A performing and effective education system requires an appropriate combination of highly qualified and well-trained staff, sufficient educational resources and facilities, and pupils and students willing to learn.

This priority aims to invest in education and training, including vocational training for the acquisition of competencies and skills, as well as lifelong learning, through the development of education and training infrastructure [7].

It also aims to support the establishment of new educational units, offering investors the land needed to develop the educational infrastructure or through public-private partnerships.

4.3. High-performing public health services at the level of Snagov commune

For the medical act to be carried out successfully, the priority element is represented by the modernization and appropriate equipment of the medical units. Therefore, this priority aims to develop the medical infrastructure and public health services in Snagov commune, so that citizens can benefit from high-quality medical services, at European standards.

4.4. High-performance public utility services that meet people's needs

Public utility services are the responsibility of the local public administration authorities, they are established, organized and managed according to the degree of urbanization, the economic and social importance of the locality and the decisions adopted by the deliberative bodies of the administrative region. The degree of development of the public service system indicates the standard of living of the citizens, so it is necessary to accelerate the modernization process to comply with European standards. This priority aims at the modernization and expansion of the technical-building network

to ensure the access of the entire locality to high-quality basic public utility services [7].

OS5. Snagov Commune – Integration into nature

Two key priorities form the structure of this objective:

5.1. Integrated waste collection and management system at the commune level

Due to the significant benefits for environmental quality and human health, ensuring a sustainable waste management system is an absolute priority. If the structure is reasonable and effectively implemented, it will have an effective sanitation effect on the commune and the rational use of household waste and absorbed household waste. An important element pursued by waste management in Snagov commune is the separation of waste directly at the source, the reduction of the amount of non-renewable waste and its proper storage [4].

5.2. Improving the quality of environmental factors - air, water, and soil by reducing pollution and its impact

The combined effect of population growth and urbanization has put tremendous pressure on resources and the environment. Citizens' value system and expectations for quality of life indicate that people's intolerance of harsh environmental conditions has increased; they tend to show increased expectations regarding the activities of the local public administration, rather than changes in personal behaviour [4].

The purpose of this priority is to improve the quality of environmental factors by reducing pollution and pollution sources in the administrative area. Therefore, a series of measures are proposed to monitor and evaluate environmental factors, improve water quality, reduce air pollution, and educate people about environmental protection measures.

OS6 – Snagov Commune – Performance in local public administration

High administrative capacity

In the coming years, one of the main factors that the Snagov commune will rely on for competitive differentiation at the county level will be the quality of local government actions and the ability to build partnerships and

collaborations with local participants, citizens and civil society to ensure political strategy, general planning and coordinated development [6].

The work in this direction aims to rationalize the administrative structure in order to improve the absorption capacity of European funds and to improve the quality and attractiveness of the services provided to citizens and the business environment at the local, county and regional levels.

The development of Snagov commune aims to follow the development trend of modern cities, gradually adopting new technologies and developing innovative measures in their functions. In other words, it aims to be defined by the "Smart City" concept.

The concept of a smart city has emerged recently and involves the provision of services based on ICT technologies that are incorporated into the functions of the entire city and the active participation of the community in solving local problems. The approach of the local public administration regarding this concept is to assume the intention that the project will be implemented at the local level, and the principles and models established by the smart city concept will be gradually adopted in the local development measures.

Similar case studies regarding the sustainable development in the rural areas at the local level in important communes were made by [8, 9].

CONCLUSIONS

The development strategy of the municipality of Snagov is a guiding document that must go through a process of continuous reassessment and optimization of the development options of the municipality to adapt to the evolution of economic and social realities.

The implementation of development strategies fundamentally depends on the ability of the local government body to attract community and/or private funds to finance the selected actions and to manage the local budget funds wisely. To implement this strategy, local public authorities need to strengthen the

management and execution capacities of institutions at all levels.

Due to the long implementation process, the local administration must adopt clear working procedures in all functional departments, paying special attention to the structure responsible for implementing the strategy.

The following work analyzes the results of the questionnaire that was given to the citizens of Snagov commune, which aimed to gather the opinion of the population about certain projects, the degree of satisfaction with local public services, but also it sought to involve the citizens in proposing new projects for the community. Regarding the development of the Snagov commune, the respondents were asked to suggest a project that would have a positive impact on the citizens. They largely proposed projects for the development of tourism in the locality, the reconstruction of the "Mihail Kogălniceanu" High School, the rehabilitation of schools and the construction of kindergartens with extended hours, the development of utility networks, greening measures, the development of medical infrastructure and the attraction of entrepreneurs to diversify the job market in the commune.

The key challenge is ensuring a well-balanced and sustainable evolution in the territory through the adoption of a polycentric development strategy, avoiding the decline of the rural population, providing services to the surrounding rural areas, and maintaining their ongoing attractiveness.

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