

RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF REGIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Camelia MĂNESCU, Teodor MATEOC, Tiberiu IANCU, Ada-Flavia CRISTINA,
Alin POPESCU, Nicoleta MATEOC-SÎRB

University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Timisoara, 119, Calea Aradului,
Timisoara, Romania, Phone:+ 0040277430, Email: mateocnicol@yahoo.com

Corresponding author: mateocnicol@yahoo.com

Abstract

Regional development is a new concept whose opportunities are enhancing and diversifying economic activities, enhancing investments in the private sector, contributing to unemployment reduction, and last but not least improving the standard of living. To assure the development policies in economy, agriculture, forestry, tourism, regional planning, infrastructure, and education etc., it is needed to take into account the specific conditions of the rural regions, Romanian villages and to observe the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. In this context, the paper aimed to point out the opportunities for the development of rural communities through regional development.

Key words: regional development, regional policies, local resources

INTRODUCTION

The development of rural communities is conditioned by two important activities: **local development**, that aims at developing a locality and its neighbourhoods and **territorial development** that covers the major investments in infrastructure at regional level. Regional development can be seen as the process through which a community becomes more responsible of the issues and of the potential it has, thus managing to better organise and plan its resources. [1]
Regional development represents the process through which they try to change the conditions and factors acting at community level so that, as a result of these changes, the community reaches higher levels of standards of living.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was performed using methods, procedures and techniques of the traditional and modern. In the category of traditional scientific approach are based on the first analysis and synthesis with which they have been using other methods or processes: observation and description.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Some European regions and towns have been faced with serious crises of local economies while others have discovered new advantages of the market. In this situation, it was necessary to restructure and adjust local productive systems, linking them to new technical and economic conditions.

Among other opportunities of regional development are: development of enterprises, the market of labour force, attraction of investments, transfer of technology, development of small and medium enterprises, improving the infrastructure, the quality of the environment, rural development, health, instruction, education, culture.

Rural development has a distinct place within regional policies and it concerns the following aspects: eradicating / diminishing poverty in rural areas, balancing economic opportunities and social conditions between the urban and rural environments, stimulating local initiatives, and preserving spiritual and cultural heritage.

Rural development began to exist in Romania in 1998 when the first law concerning it was issued. In order to prepare decentralisation of the decisions at central level in Romania they established, through voluntary association,

eight regions of development (NUTS 2), specific territorial entities with no administrative status.

The region represents within the policy of regional development of the European Union, the fundamental element in academic and practical approaches of founding strategies and policies of economic and social development at territorial level. [6]

The structure of Romania’s territory per regions is shown in Table 1. [3]

Table 1. Romania’s distribution by region

Geographical area	Counties	Area (km ²)	Population (thousands of inhabitants)	Density (inhabitants/km ²)
1. North-East	Bacău, Vaslui, Neamț, Iași, Suceava, Botoșani	36,850	3,302	89.6
2. South-East	Constanța, Tulcea, Brăila, Buzău, Vrancea, Galați	35,762	2,545	71.2
3. South	Teleorman, Giurgiu, Călărași, Ialomița, Dâmbovița, Prahova, Argeș	34,453	3,136	91.0
4. South-West	Olt, Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinți, Vâlcea	29,212	2,075	71.1
5. West	Caraș-Severin, Hunedoara, Timiș, Arad	32,034	1,828	57.1
6. North-West	Cluj, Sălaj, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Maramureș, Satu Mare	34,159	2,600	76.1
7. Centre	Brașov, Covasna, Sibiu, Alba, Harghita, Mureș	34,100	2,360	69.2
8. Bucharest	București, Ilfov	1,821	2,272	1,247.8

Source: Own processing after Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2013

Romania’s administrative regions are represented by the counties, administrative structures similar to NUTS 3. They were established through the Law no. 2/1968 concerning the administrative organisation of Romania. At present, Romania has 41 counties plus the Municipium of Bucharest. At county level, the entire central public administration has its own decentralised services. This explains why the documents of programming and financing from the State budget that belong to central public administration are represented by counties (NUTS 3) and communes (NUTS 5). [2]

Rural area covers the totality of communes in Romania. In Article 5 of the Law no. 2/1968, the commune is defined as “the administrative territorial unit covering the rural population united by common interest and traditions. A

commune is formed by one or more villages depending on economic, social, cultural, geographical, and demographic conditions. Organising a commune ensures economic, administrative, cultural, and social development of rural localities”.

A new definition of the rural area was stipulated by the Common Order no. 173/160/93 from March 2004, of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, and Rural Development, the Ministry of Administration and Interior, and the Ministry of European Integration. The normative act, observing the principles of the European Charta of Rural Area defining the notion of rural area through its territorial component, relating the geographical area to the structure of the land fund and to dominating characteristics concerning the population and nature of the activities carried out in those geographical areas, different from those of the urban population.

In 2014, European Union had 503 million inhabitants, ranking third in the world's population after China and India. On the one hand, Europe's population increases naturally (births exceeds the number of deaths) and on the other hand, due to net migration (the number of people who are established in the EU is higher than the number of those who leave). Romania ranks seventh in the EU -28 in terms of population size.

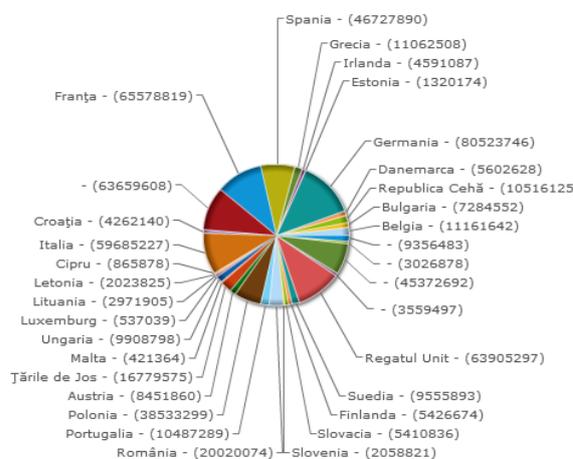


Fig.1. The population of the countries EU-28, 2014

The European Union has an area of over 4 million km².

In size, France is the largest country of the

Union, and the smallest Malta, Romania being on the 9th place in the area.

In order to assess realistically the level of regional development of Romania it would be useful to compare the situation of Romania with the situation of other European Union member nations that are our model of economic and social development.

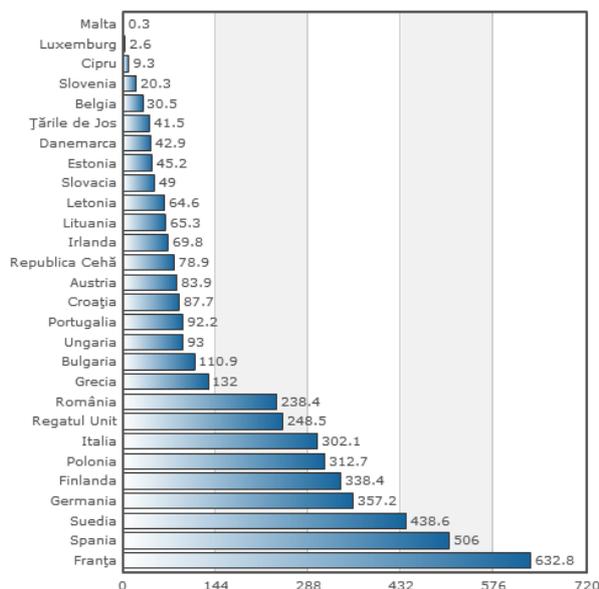


Fig. 2. EU-28 states surface, thousands km², 2014

The main indicators concerning the regional development of our country compared to those of the other member-nations of the European Union are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Main indicators concerning the regional development of Romania compared to those of the other member-nations of the European Union

Specification	Unit of measure	Ro	EU
Total population	Thousands inhabitants	20.02	505.66
Total area	Km ² /	238.40	4.49
Population density	inhabitants/km ²	83.9	112.5
Population structure per age groups	%	100	100
• 0-14 years	%	15.8	15.6
• 65 years and over	%	16.1	17.8
GDP/inhabitant (ppc)	Euro/inhabitants	12,800	25,600
Structure of occupied population	%	100	100
-agriculture	%	29.0	4.6
-industry, constructions	%	28.6	24.9
-services	%	42.4	68.6
Unemployment rate	%	7.0	10.4
Natural increase	‰	-3.6	6.8

*Only the population from localities whose density is below 100 inhabitants/km²

Source: Own processing according to Eurostat and Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2013 [3,4]

In general, to point out the discrepancies, the differences are quantified through the use of macroeconomic indicators such as total GDP or GDP per capita, calculated at regional level.

The most common indicator is the GDP per capita, used mainly due to its double meaning: (1) measure of the volume of results in economic activity; (2) incomes from economic activity in a certain region.

Regional policy aims at supporting poorer geographical areas in order to reduce the differences between the communities of the same country – or of the same area, in the case of the European Union – from the point of view of the population welfare. If we want regional policy – as part of the public authority policy – to reach its goals, we need those institutions to manage one’s own resources and resources allotted by the other central and local authorities with a view to local development and to territory management. [5]

The European Union regions with a low GDP per capita are less developed and have in common the following features:

- geographical distance and infrastructure improper for present requirements;
- old or not profitable industrial structures;
- an old agricultural sector;
- social mutations, urban or rural

depopulation, with negative consequences on both society and economy, and on the environment. [7]

Domestic regional policies should be seen within a frame in which specific objectives are developed in agreement with the one’s own needs and potential.

Components of rural development

Projects of rural development should contain a few mandatory components concerning the **institutional development**, the **economic development**, the development of localities and territorial management and administration.

Institutional development concerns the capacity of an institution of using efficiently human, material and financial resources in order to reach the goals.

The level at which they project institutional development depends on the given situation;

in exhaustive regional policy, at country level, this development refers to the following:

- economic agents, as deconcentrated structures or as suppliers of public services in different management types;
- a central public authority;
- local public authorities;
- project management units that can be either one of the above mentioned positions or a combination between two or more of them.

Institutional development works aim at several types of projects whose goals are:

- resource management;
- long- or medium-term development strategies;
- planning implementation actions of the projects adapted.

Economic development through macro policy will be more productive through the territorial (regional) component because:

- the success of economic and structural reforms depends on local and regional entrepreneurship;
- macro policies are implemented also through the dynamism of the local communities (with strategies adapted to these communities) since social cohesion is better exercised at local level.

Local development includes economic, social, cultural, and political aspects whose achievement is due to endogenous development (from bottom up).

Territory management and administration has two main aspects: Territory management can be **strategic**, which aims at developing and managing the territory medium- or long-term, and **operational**, which solves short-term issues.

Projects aiming at territorial development should be:

- complex (a diversified system of aspects);
- multi dimensional (economic, social, environment protection);
- sustainable (for the future generations).

The goals of territorial management are:

- a balanced economic and social development, with respect for specificity;
- quality of human life and community;
- a responsible management of natural resources and of environmental protection;
- rational land use.

Managing territory covers regional policy (land planning), i.e.:

- land ordering;
- valorising rationally natural resources;
- achieving economic growth;
- increasing life quality.

Land planning covers:

- area analysis (scientific aspect);
- land planning (normative aspect) is a technical and administrative process meant to reach some previously defined goals. .[8]

CONCLUSIONS

The policy of regional development aims at improving, long-term, regional economic conditions.

The main goal of this policy is reducing territorial differences and achieving a balance or ensuring a certain inter-regional equity.

Rural development is a complex process of harmonious development of all areas of a country or of a unique European area, capable of ensuring the territorial differences and of achieving a relative balance between the levels of economic and social development of different areas, taking into account the sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

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